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FREEDOM OR FATE?

Responsibility, Destiny, and Surrender in Sufism

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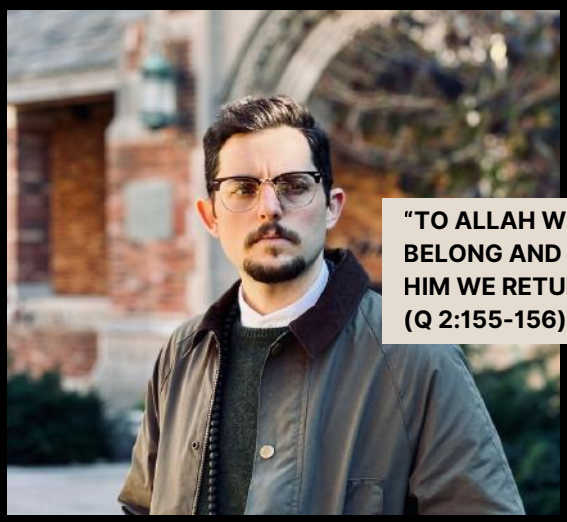
Letter from the Editor

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

اللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ



"TO ALLAH WE BELONG AND TO HIM WE RETURN" (Q 2:155-156).

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate and Merciful, and may His perpetual peace and blessings be upon His most noble Prophet, Muḥammad, and upon his Progeny and Companions. May Allah's blessing be upon the true Friend (Walī) of Allah, the grandson of Allah's Messenger, the saint Sidi al-Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, may Allah sanctify his secret, and by whose blessings and guidance we undertake the following:

The modern condition is one that is fraught with alienation: from nature, each other and our selves, and from the Creator. The last issue of this magazine was an invitation to readers to find a sense of belonging, purpose, and a means of returning to their original source: "We are from Allah and to Him we return."

Among the many reasons for this sense of alienation is the anxiety produced by our modern forms of life. It is fueled by our desire for control and mastery, the ideology that with scientific knowledge we can enhance our lives, calculate and manage risk, and overcome the uncertainties that haunt us. The right education is meant to guarantee a stable future; sophisticated economic programs are meant to ensure welfare; fitness trackers help us monitor our health and optimize performance. At the same time, the technologies we cherish breed the very uncertainties we depend on them to abate. Artificial intelligence is putting many careers at risk; economic "growth" burns away the very resources we rely on; and despite medical advances we find unprecedented rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.

All this is premised on an understanding of the world that anything that gets in the way of our desires is a "problem" that can be resolved through knowledge and technology. It is the "driving cultural force" of modernity, as the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa explains, "to make the world controllable." But the inescapable truth, he writes, is that it is "uncontrollable," and it is only when we encounter the uncontrollable that we experience the things that are worth living for.

As the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught us, part of faith (īmān) is to believe in Allah's decree, the good and the bad. The patient, upon being afflicted with fear, hunger and loss — which Allah says is sure to befall us — say, "to Allah we belong and to Him we return" (Q 2:155-156).

As Allah and His Messenger, peace be upon him, remind us in clear terms, here and elsewhere: the world is inevitably uncontrollable. How do we deal with this uncertainty and surrender to the Divine Will?

A popular misconception is that Sufis are passive, submissive, and fatalistic. But as a number of articles in this issue show, that could not be further from the truth. That is why this issue is dedicated to the themes of responsibility, destiny, and surrender. It is an attempt to distinguish between the misperception that Sufi reliance (tawakkul) on Allah is a passive mode of existence, and the active form of reliance that Sidi Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karki teaches. We hope that it will help readers reckon and reconcile with the uncontrollability of the world.

We might experience the world as uncontrollable, but in fact Allah is in control, and "Allah is the best of planners" (Q 3:54). But if Allah decrees and determines, how do we remain responsible for our behavior, how can we reconcile destiny with choice, and how can we live up to the ideal of active surrender? Read on, with an open heart, that you may benefit from the luminous wisdom of Sidi Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari and his disciples whose hearts he's illuminated.

Rami Koujah
September 27, 2025

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Call for Contributions

Nūn invites writers, artists, scholars, and practitioners to contribute original works that engage with the rich traditions and diverse expressions of Sufism. We welcome submissions that explore the spiritual, literary, and artistic dimensions of the Sufi path.

Possible topics include:

- Sufi literature and poetry
- The lives and teachings of Sufi saints
- Contemporary interpretations of Sufi principles
- Personal reflections and experiences on the Sufi journey
- Visual art inspired by Sufi themes

Submission Guidelines

- Send your written or visual work to nur@karkari.org.
- Include a brief biography with your submission.

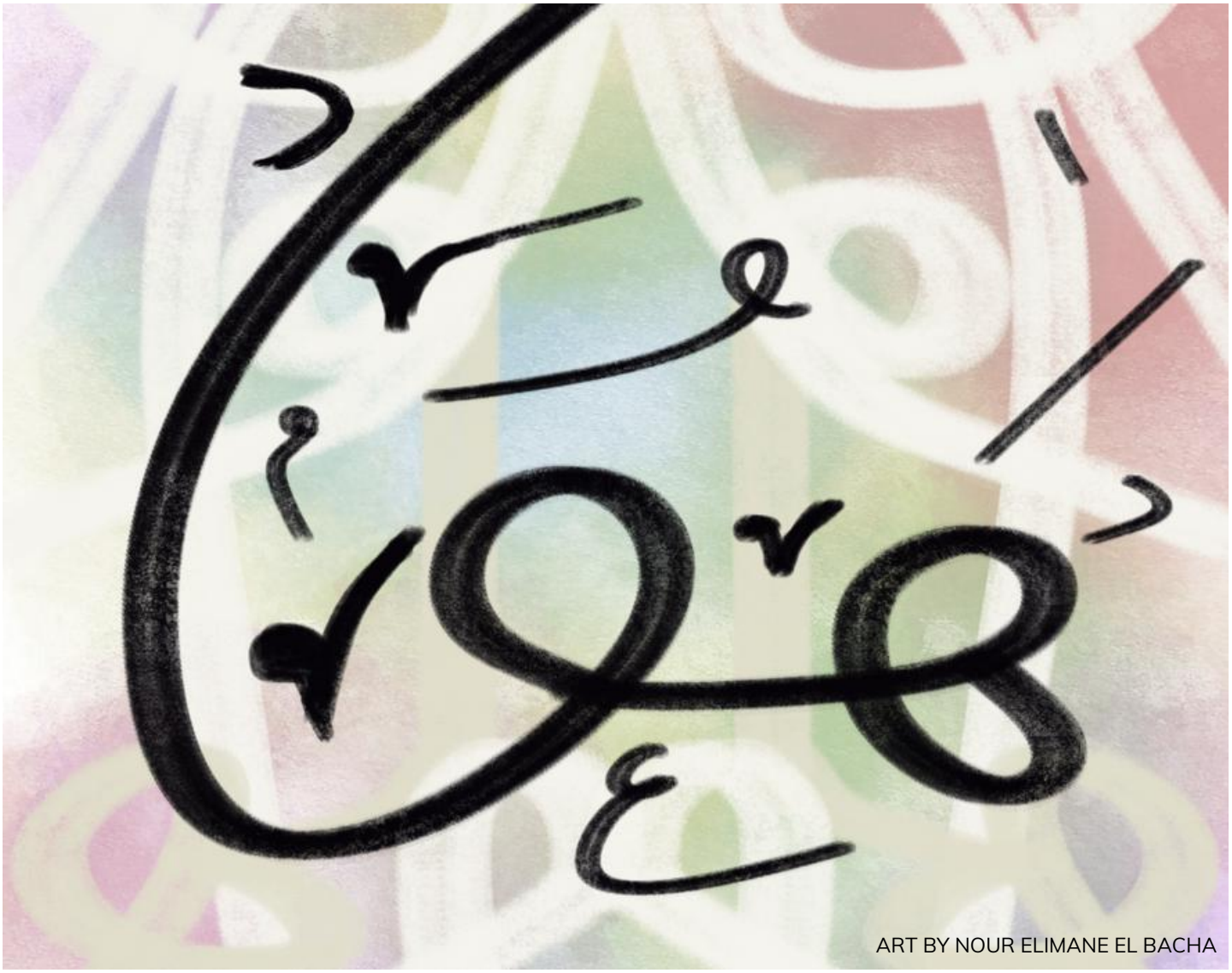
Join *Nūn* in exploring the depth and beauty of Sufi traditions. We look forward to your contributions.

For more information, visit nur-journal.org or contact us at nur@karkari.org.

AN INVITATION TO THE DIVINE LIGHT

Part 1: Islām, Īmān, and Iḥsān

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL KARKARI



ART BY NOUR ELIMANE EL BACHA

The pillars of *islām* (submission) are five: the testimony of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah for those who can do so. All these pillars are specifically tied to the physical structure of the human body; they necessarily require the limbs and this body to perform these acts of worship and draw closer to Allah (Exalted and Glorified).

This religion, at this level, is *islām*, and at the same time, by consensus, the religion is Islam.[1]

Then comes the level of *īmān* (belief), which consists entirely of actions of the heart and pertains entirely to the unseen: to believe in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, the Last Day, and the divine decree, both the good and the bad. Similarly, this is not

limited to the external limbs but pertains to the heart within this physical structure. It involves firm belief in the unseen nature of these six pillars.

Then comes the station of *iḥsān* (excellence), which is the highest station in Islam. The station of *iḥsān* is neither purely an act of the heart nor purely an act of the body. Rather, it unites and perfects both. As the Prophet ﷺ explained, it is "To worship Allah as if you see Him." This station is distinguished by its focus on vision. *Iḥsān* is not about worship through believing in the unseen, nor should one imagine they are among the people of *iḥsān* if their obedience is bodily acts of worship;

The Hadith of Jibrīl (Gabriel) (peace be upon him) is definitive and leaves no room for debate. It states: "To worship Allah as if you see Him." However, this worship must meet the condition of "as if you see Him." Here, the Hadith introduces the phrase of similitude, "as if" (*Kāf al-tashbīh*), meaning there is a likeness to the closeness of this station and this vision: "as if you see Him."

The Prophet's ﷺ complete answer is, "To worship Allah as if you see Him, for if you do not see Him then He sees you." "If you do not see Him," and this stems from your inherent nonexistence, means that this sense of nonexistence must be obliterated, and you must attain true certainty that you cannot see Allah since you are, in essence, nonexistent. Yet, if you do not see Him, you can still benefit from the phrase of similitude — "as if you see Him" — that you have established in this manifestation, for indeed, "He sees you."

We all know this Hadith in terms of its language. *Islām*, with its five pillars, is practiced by everyone, praise be to Allah. However, Islam has three dimensions: knowledge (*ʿilm*), vision (*ʿayn*), and reality (*haqq*). Similarly, *īmān* has knowledge, vision, and reality, and likewise *iḥsān*.

"TO WORSHIP ALLAH AS IF YOU SEE HIM, FOR IF YOU DO NOT SEE HIM THEN HE SEES YOU."

Knowledge of Islam means knowing the five pillars: whether you perform them or not, you have knowledge of them. This is informational knowledge, and this kind of knowledge is widespread and general. Everyone knows that Allah has made these pillars obligatory. However, people may complain about their own weakness or heedlessness, acknowledging that even if they perform the pillars, they may not perform them perfectly.

Then comes the vision of Islam, which is to perform the pillars so they become one's vision. These pillars become the purpose for which one was created. They become the vision (*ʿayn*) through which one perceives everything — past, present, and future. One sees everything through this lens, knowing that they were created only for this purpose. Then comes the reality, where one becomes so resolute in their commitment to these pillars that even if a sword were placed upon their neck, they would not abandon this matter. They are annihilated (*fānī*) in it and in these pillars.

Superficially, the physical performance of these pillars appears to be the same always. If there are three brothers, one worshipping through knowledge, one through vision, and one through reality, they would all perform the same pillars. No one would add or subtract from the obligation of the pillar. However, each station is different: first comes knowledge, then vision is higher and more exalted, and the highest and most exalted is reality.

The same thing applies to īmān. All of its pillars are of the heart. This faith, which we all, praise be to Allah, believe in — belief in the oneness of His essence, belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, as well as in His decree, both the good and the bad — might sound like routine to the listener,

something they are accustomed to hearing, as it was for me in the beginning. It is merely a reminder; I am not bringing anything new. We are simply reminding ourselves.

[1] Sidi Shaykh here begins his explanation of the famous Hadith of Jibrīl (Gabriel), wherein the Archangel Jibrīl (may Allah be pleased with him) asks the Prophet ﷺ to explain the meanings of *islām*, *īmān* (belief), and *iḥsān* (excellence). The Prophet mentions the testimony of faith, prayer, fasting, etc. when he defines *islām*. In other words, *islām* refers to a level of the religion, and Islam is also the name of the entirety of the religion itself.

A QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE ON SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

BY TIAGO GADOTTI

The Qur'an offers profound insight into the nature of true knowledge when it states that **"the people of reason … reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth" (*yatafakkarūna fī khalq al-samāwāt wa-l-ard*) (Q 3:190–191)**

A science consists of three elements: the method, the explanatory principles (or causes), and the object, which is the thing being studied. Different sciences may share the same object but differ in their explanatory cause and method. For example, both a mason and an engineer may know how to make a wall stand. The object is the same, but the reasons each gives for that fact are different, and the method of their knowledge differs. The mason knows things much more through experience, whereas the engineer can explain through subtler causes, such as the chemical nature of materials.

It becomes evident that we can create a hierarchy of sciences, in which the superior science is the one that explains objects through higher causes and follows a more abstract method of understanding. Furthermore, a superior science always directs the subordinate science; hence, the engineer is above the mason and not the reverse.

Here, we may ask: Is there a Supreme Science that considers all objects through the highest cause and follows the deepest method of understanding? It seems that this is precisely the science alluded to in the verse: reflection upon the creation of the heavens and the earth.

Its method is "reflection" or "meditation" (*fikr*). Unlike the analytical method adopted in secular sciences, reflection is an aggregative movement rather than a disaggregative one. Reflection and meditation seek to uncover the deep meaning of the object and its relation to the total order, rather than breaking the object into smaller parts and investigating its material structure.

The explanatory cause is "creation" (*khalq*), which is an act of Allah. Therefore, true science seeks to see the divine action in the heavens and the earth and how everything between these two poles manifests the nature of Allah. Hence, the explanatory cause is Allah Himself, by His name of "the Creator" (*al-Khāliq*). Only divine speech can truly express divine action, which is why the best expression of this supreme science is the Qur'an.

The object is "the heavens and the earth," which are not limited to this visible heaven and earth. These are mere instances of the great Heaven and Earth — the principles of duality, or the very possibility of creation itself, representing a departure from the primordial One.

If this is the true science, all other sciences and theories about creation only make sense insofar as they are ordered to it or serve as its foundation. Any science or perspective not aligned with this superior perspective will inevitably suffer from an intrinsic and insurmountable limitation: This analytical method, which is divisive by nature, will only lead to further division. This is precisely what happened with the People of the Book when knowledge (*ʿilm*) came to them — not the true science of Allah, which is unifying, but the analytical science, which is disaggregative: **"And they did not divide except after knowledge had come to them, out of rivalry among themselves" (*wa-mā tafarraqū illā min baʿd mā jā'ahumu al-ʿilm baghyan baynahum*) (Q 42:14)**.

This division in the order of knowledge even generates division in the order of wills, resulting in rivalry among men (*baghy*), as can be observed in the presence of vanity and envy in scientific circles. Thus, no matter how long discussions may continue, they will never lead to the knowledge of the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*), which is also a divine name, but only to partial truths. When separated from the perspective of the total truth, these partial truths become veritable falsehoods that confuse the heart.

POEM

In his company

High on his steed,
The horseman approaches,
Galloping with speed,
Handing out torches.

The needy draws near,
The arrogant flees,
Ever the exposer,
The horseman sees.

Through town and village,
Through mountain and sea,
He saves the lineage
Of the purest tree.

Children are born
Of love and light;
Darknesses mourn
Their successful flight.

His army ever grows,
His words ring true,
His light flows
Within many and few.

In the horseman's world,
Light is monarch,
Smoothing the swirled,
Allowing the stars to embark.

In the horseman's keep,
The servant is master,
The sour turns sweet,
The sun rises faster.

He teaches and preaches,
To those willing to listen,
Expanding his reach—
In his wake, plains glisten.

No need to fret in his company,
No need to worry, or speak,
For your mind is a symphony,
That he alone can heed.

Once with him, all is forgotten—
Pain, sorrow, tears, and grief.
It matters not if you're in heaven,
Or buried in the depths of Hell.

BY IBTIHAJ SADIKI

A HOME WITHOUT WALLS

A Journey in the Vastness of Divine Care

BY MOHAMED AZIZ ZARGLAYOUN

I set out on this journey thinking I was merely traveling from one place to another, moving between cities, crossing borders. But I did not know that this voyage would take me beyond the limits I had unknowingly placed on my own understanding of sustenance (*rizq*), shelter (*lawdh*), and divine care (*ʿināya*).

In the snowy winter of 2025 in Northern Germany, I walked for seven days with a handful of Karkari disciples on a journey during which my certainty (*yaqīn*) was tested, where my reliance (*tawakkul*) on apparent means (*asbāb*) was suspended, and where I witnessed firsthand the generosity of my Lord. I once believed that home (*bayt*) was a structure I could own or rent, that food and money had to be earned, that safety came from walls and locked doors. But through the blessings and permission of my Shaykh, Sidi Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari (may Allah sanctify his secret), I came to taste a truth that cannot be learned through words alone: Home is wherever Allah places you, and provision comes from Him alone.

The House of God has no walls. As our master and guide, Shaykh Mohamed Faoụzi al-Karkari (QS), writes in one of his aphorisms (*hikam*): “If He makes you witness (*ashhadaka*) the unfolding of divine apportionment (*qisma*), you will ṣee withholding (*manʿ*) as the very essence of giving (*ʿatāʾ*).”

All praise belongs to Allah for the generosity and grace of my spiritual teacher, Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari (QS) who granted us this blessed Sufi peregrination (*siyāha*), through which we learned that the home is not a fixed place of shelter, but that every land of Allah is a home for us. Allah says in the Qur'an (106:1-4):

For the security of Quraysh,
Their security in the winter and summer journey.
So let them worship the Lord of this House,
Who fed them against hunger and granted them safety from fear.

We discovered that it is not the rented lodging that shelters us, but rather Allah Himself who grants refuge (*lawdh*). In the freezing cold of Northern Germany, we found dwelling (*maskan*), clothing (libās), blankets, and even a pillow. Before this, when we hungered, we either asked for food or purchased it. But when walking the path of reliance in this vast house of Allah, provision (*rizq*) was already prepared and of the finest quality. We used to believe that one must depend on worldly means (*asbāb*) to survive — only to experience firsthand that Allah provides sustenance without intermediary.

To taste the reality that all of creation is your dwelling and that it is He who shelters you changes the entire system you were raised upon. You begin to perceive — if only a little — that all affairs are truly in Allah's hands, not in those of any creature, no matter how much you strategize or plan. Nothing unfolds except what He has decreed. This realization brings forth an indescribable serenity (*ṭumaʾnīna*) in the divine decree (*qadar*).

You may ask for a drop, and He withholds it — only to grant you an entire river. It is just as our master, Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari (QS) says: "If He makes you witness the unfolding of divine apportionment, you will see withholding as the very essence of giving."

Eventually, you reach a state where, upon requesting something, you anticipate denial before fulfillment — not out of despair, but because you have come to know that if He withholds, what follows will surpass what you originally sought. Glory be to Allah, the Most Great.

What is even more astonishing is that, at times, you find the threads of divine power (*qudra*) weaving events in alignment with the inclinations of your heart or the desires of your soul (*nafs*). And here, you taste something of His words: **"When his Lord manifested Himself (*tajallā*) to the mountain, He made it crumble to dust, and Moses fell down unconscious." (Q 7:143)** Although the mountain was reduced to dust and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) fell unconscious, both remained in their place. The mountain ceased to be a mountain, and Moses ceased to be Moses — yet they were still there. Our Shaykh (QS) captures this mystical transformation in his poem She is Laylā (*Hiya Laylā*) published in his poetry collection, Chalice of Spirits (*Dīwān dīnān al-arwāḥ*):

I arranged my essence in stations (marāqī),
I transformed my body — its vessel (ināhā).
I singularized the spirit — its breath blew forth,
I spread out the meanings of Ṭāhā.
I engraved an unseen inscription,
My heart contained its name.
I altered the letters of my name,
It taught me its Named.

Now that I have returned, I can no longer see home as I once did. The walls that defined it — shaped by the confines of my lower intellect, bound by the limitations of the apparent realm — have crumbled. And though I often fall into heedlessness (*ghafla*), I cannot unsee the vastness of Allah's care (*ʿināya*). I have learned that the home I was searching for was never made of bricks and wood, but rather, it was the certainty that Allah alone is the One who shelters, nourishes, and sustains. This journey was not just through cities and landscapes, but through the very nature of reliance (*tawakkul*) itself.

All praise belongs to Allah for the grace of my spiritual teacher and guide, Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari (QS), for his generosity and boundless kindness toward his weak and wayward disciples. May Allah allow us to walk this path with open hearts, until every veil is lifted and we see with luminous clarity that we have never been outside His care — not even for a moment.

The Duality of Light

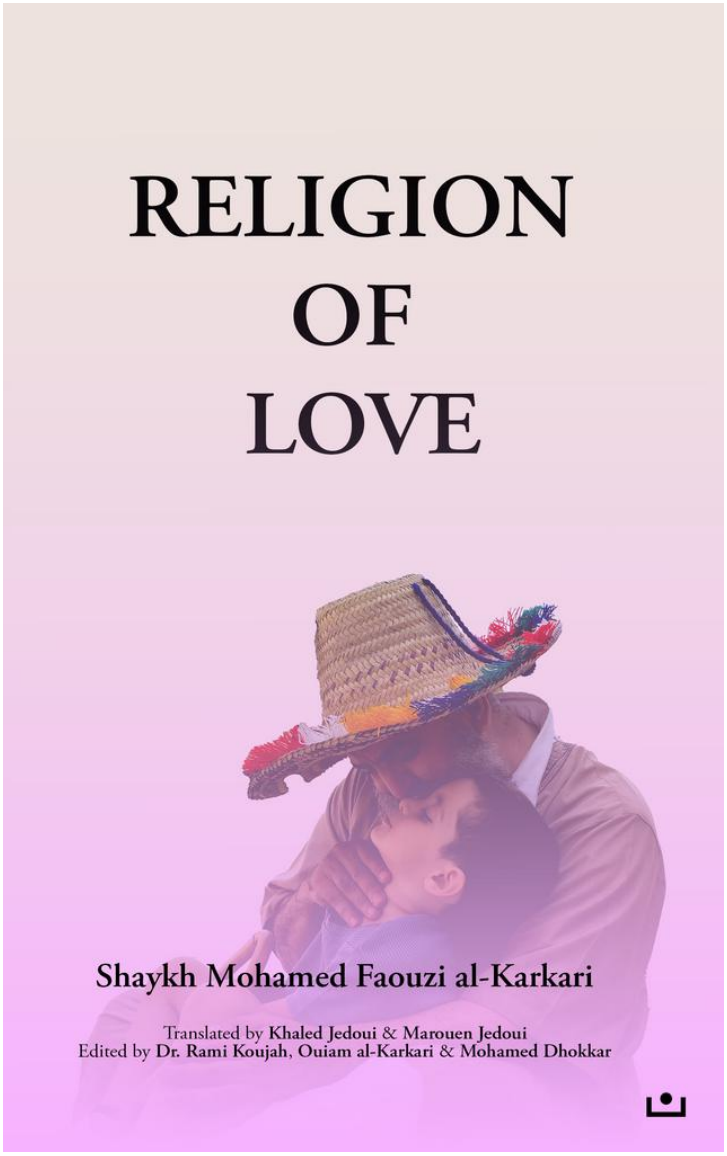
An excerpt from *Religion of Love*

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL KARKARI

Light (*al-nūr*) is the source of all that exists, the wellspring from which everything flows. It is not the created world that gives rise to light, but rather, the created world bears the imprint, the trace (*athar*), of this primordial light. The first luminous trace of this divine radiance was the light of the Prophet ﷺ, as revealed in the divine saying (*hadīth qudṣī*): "I grasped a handful of My light, and said: 'Be Muḥammad'" (*Ṣafūrī, Nuzhat al-majālis*, 2:74). And as the Prophet ﷺ also stated: "The first thing Allah created was the light of your Prophet, O Jābir" (*ʿAjlūnī, Kashf al-khafāʾ*, 1:265, no. 827; *Ṣāwī, Bulghat al-sālik*, 4:778).

The concept of light (*nūr*) invites both wonder and bewilderment. We encounter *hadiths* that seem to speak of two distinct lights: the light of the Prophet ﷺ as the first creation, and the light of the Divine witnessed by the Prophet ﷺ himself. This apparent paradox unveils a profound truth: There are indeed two lights — the Light of the Creator and the light of the created, which is the light of the Prophet ﷺ.

When one speaks of witnessing the Light (*nūr*) of the Chosen One ﷺ, it is to speak of the highest exemplification of Allah's light. This light, the pinnacle of similitudes, takes the example of the niche, the lamp, the crystal, and the radiant star. As for the Light of the Almighty, it transcends all comparison, delimitations, and description. It is the boundless, absolute light of the Creator, the source of all illumination and being.


RELIGION
OF
LOVE
Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari
Translated by Khaled Jedoui & Marouen Jedoui
Edited by Dr. Rami Koujah, Ouiam al-Karkari & Mohamed Dhokkar

The Light (*nūr*) of Allah is the light of the heavy cloud (*al-ʿamāʾ*), representing the primordial, pre-created state of divine obscurity or formlessness. He was, and nothing existed alongside Him, as the Prophet ﷺ declared: "He was in *al-ʿamāʾ*, with no air beneath Him and no air above Him" (*Tayālisī*, *Muṣnad Abī Dāwūd*, no. 1189; *Ahmad, Muṣnad*, no. 16188; *Ibn Mājah, Sunan*, no. 182; *Tirmidhī, Sunan*, no. 3109).

Yet, there are some who, having read a few scattered texts, mistakenly believe they have grasped the totality of truth and deny the created nature of light, even denying the very act of creation itself. We must strive for deeper understanding, discerning the distinction between the created light of the Prophet ﷺ and the uncreated, eternal light of Allah.

When we speak of the light of the Prophet ﷺ, we refer to a created light — the first light brought forth by Allah. From this light, all other creations emerged. However, when we speak of the light of the Creator, it is beyond the confines of createdness. The hadith is clear. When the Prophet ﷺ was asked, "Have you seen your Lord?" he responded: "A light I am seeing!" (*Nawawī, Sharh al-Nawawī ʿalā Muslim*, 3:389, no. 178).

As we walk the path of spiritual cultivation, we should strive to embody the supplication the Prophet ﷺ made when departing his house for the mosque: "O Allah, place light in my heart, light in my hearing, light in my sight" (*Bukhārī, Saḥīḥ*, no. 6316; *Muslim, Saḥīḥ*, no. 763), asking that our limbs be transformed from their physical nature into their original essence — the primordial light, the first light created by the Creator, which is the light of the Prophet ﷺ.

However, when he prays at the end of the supplication: "Magnify the light within me," (ibid.) it is as though he is asking: "Veil me from the light from which I was created, through the vision of Your unmatched light. Draw me into Your Divine Presence, O Lord, and immerse me within it, for You have power over all things."

Indeed, when our Lord wills something, He simply says: **"Be!" and it is (Q 36:82)**.

THE COVENANT OF LIGHT

BY ASMAA HAYMOUDI

The path (*tarīq*) to Allah is structured upon principles (*usūl*), methods (*asālīb*), and an educational framework (*minhāj tarbawī*) through which the seeker (*murīd*) aṭtaiṇs the Divine Presence (*hadrat Allah*). A true spiritual path necessitates a guide — a shaykh — who establishes these foundations — a realized Knower of Allah (*ʿārif bi-llāh*) who leads others toward Him. Such a guide is not chosen arbitrarily but is divinely appointed as a *khalīfa* (vicegerent) on Earth. Through adherence to these foundational principles, the seeker's soul is refined and elevated into the Divine Presence.

The foundations (*uṣūl*) of our noble Karkariyya path are firmly rooted in prophetic guidance (*al-hadī al-nabawī*) and remain in harmony with the criteria of the divine law, the *Sharīʿa*. The first of these sacred foundations is the Pledge of Divine Satisfaction (*bayʿat al-riḍwān*) between the guiding shaykh and the disciple.

Allah, Exalted is He, states: **"Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility upon them and rewarded them with a near victory." (Q 48:18)**

What is the pledge of allegiance? Why do we pledge allegiance? To whom do we pledge? And what are its fruits?

The pledge is a sacred covenant (*ʿahd*) and commitment (*mīthāq*) to reviving what the Qur'an and Sunna have enjoined and to upholding divine rulings. It is an act of loyalty (walāʾ), obedience (samʿ wa-ṭāʿa), and

INDEED, WHEN OUR LORD WILLS SOMETHING, HE SIMPLY SAYS: "BE!" AND IT IS (Q 36:82).

to the *khalīfa* in return for his just governance. At its core, the pledge is an agreement between two parties: the *imām*, who represents the first party; and the *Umma* (community) or the individual, which constitute the second party.

From the exoteric perspective, within the traditional framework, the *imām* — as the ruler in this worldly sense — is entrusted with governing in accordance with what pleases the Lord, while the Umma pledges full obedience and submission to the *imām*'s guidance. From the esoteric perspective, however, there is also a pledge of allegiance (*bayʿa*) that must be established between the spiritual *imām*, the *walī* (saint), and the believers (*muʾminīn*) as they journey toward the Truth through the path (*tarīq*) of the Qur'an and Sunna.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever dies without having a pledge of allegiance upon their neck dies a death of ignorance (*mītatan jāhilīyya*)" (Muslim).

This hadith strongly emphasizes the necessity of giving a pledge and warns against neglecting it. To die without having pledged allegiance is to live and die in a state of deviation from divine guidance. For the Muslim community at large, it reminds us that we must be peaceful and law-abiding individuals in our societies and avoid sowing discord (*fitna*). For those who seek to connect with their unseen nature and realize it — worshipping Allah through the similitude (*tashbīh*) of divine witnessing and annihilating themselves in divine light (*fanāʾ fī al-nūr*) — they must abide by the laws and directions of the ruler of the unseen world and the world of lights: the *walī*.

Furthermore, Allah declares in the Qur'an: **"Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you (O Prophet) are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. So, whoever breaks his pledge only breaks it to his own loss, but whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah, He will grant him a great reward" (Q 48:10).**

This verse affirms that allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ — and by extension, to those inheriting his guidance — is ultimately allegiance to Allah Himself. Every sincere seeker who commits to remaining steadfast (*thabāt*) upon the spiritual path of spiritual excellence (*iḥsān*), carrying the Trust (*amāna*) of divine knowledge in both word and deed, enters into this covenant with Allah. Those who violate it and deviate from the guidance of the vicegerent *walī* governing their unseen realm only harm themselves by hastening their downfall.

The reward of remaining steadfast in the spiritual path and fulfilling the commitment of the pledge, however, is the Light (*nūr*) that guides the believer through the darkness of their heart, illuminating their path until the Day they meet their Lord in that luminous state. On that Day, those who remained true to their pledge will rejoice, while those who rejected it will grieve, lamenting: "Oh, if only I had taken the path with the Messenger!" (Q 25:27).

Thus, our pledge is the spiritual pledge of the Prophet ﷺ, and it is also the pledge of his purified household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and their perfected inheritors — the saints (*awliyāʾ*) and divine deputies (*khulafāʾ*) who guide seekers to Allah.

Our Shaykh, Sidi Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, writes in his book, *Kāf al-astār*, regarding the nature of the vicegerents of God on earth and the spiritual pledge:

> The people of Allah (*ahl Allah*), the perfected inheritors (*al-wārithūn al-kummal*), are never absent from any time or place, for they are the focus of divine gaze (*mahall al-nazar*). Through them, Allah lifts afflictions, sends down rain, answers supplications, and accepts good deeds. They are the security of the people of the Earth. They are the bearers of prophetic education (*al-tarbiyya al-nabawiyya*) in every era. Whoever pledges allegiance to them has pledged allegiance to Allah. Whoever looks upon them has looked upon Allah. But whoever breaks the covenant after sealing it with them only does so against themselves — the tree of their will (*shajarat irādatihim*) withers, their inner light (*nūr basīratihim*) is extinguished, and they regress to the state of the common people. Yet, whoever remains true to what they have covenanted with Allah will be granted the greatest reward: the perpetual witnessing (*shuhūd*) of His sacred Essence (*dhāt*), and the attainment of the station of nearness (*maqām al-muqarrabīn*). May Allah establish us firmly upon this upright path without wavering or turning back. Amen.

The pledge is not merely a historical or legal formality; it is a universal, divine law (*qānūn ilāhī*) embedded within the very structure of existence. The entire cosmos submits to the chosen *khalīfa* of Allah — the *Insān Kāmil* (Perfect Human Being), who serves as a divinely guided teacher leading seekers to knowledge of Allah. Since the highest of angels submitted to the vicegerency of Adam, what then of those who are lower than them? It is only the heedlessness of the human being, veiled by the darkness of their own heart, that refuses to submit to this existential order and the covenant of pledge.

By pledging allegiance, the seeker commits to walking the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*), avoiding distractions, and focusing solely on divine reality. The shaykh becomes the guide who directs the disciple toward Allah, teaching them to emulate his actions and words, adhere to divine commands, and refrain from prohibitions. Through this discipline, the seeker is elevated to the sacred and eternal presence (*al-ḥaḍrat al-qudsiyya al-azaliyya*) of Allah.

Our Shaykh said in one of his poems in Chalice of the Spirits (*Dīwān Dīnān al-Arwāḥ*):

> The foundation of the path is the pledge (*bayʿa*),
>
> Given with sincerity (*ṣidq*), intention (*nīyya*), and purpose (*qaṣd*).
>
> Beneath the Tree of Divine Satisfaction (*shajarat al-riḍwān*),
>
> A birth of the heart (*al-wilāda al-qalbiyya*) takes place.
>
> The lights of the Beloved manifest (*tajallī anwār al-ḥabīb*),
>
> The Prophetic spirit (*al-rūḥ al-nabawiyya*) shines forth.
>
> The greatest veil (*al-ḥijāb aḷ-akbar*) is lifted—
>
> The Muḥammadan essence (*al-dhāt al-Muḥammadiyya*) revealed.
>
> Allah opens hearts (*yaftaḥ Allāh al-qulūb*)
>
> Through the highest of signs (*bi-l-ishāra al-ghāliyya*).
>
> It is the steed of the Most Merciful (*burāq al-Raḥmān*),
>
> The ascension beyond all veils (*li-l-ḥujub al-ghaybiyya*).

Therefore, one realizes that the pledge is not simply an oath of allegiance but a dynamic unfolding of the divine Trust (*amāna*) that bridges the visible and unseen realms, binding the seeker to a guide who is the embodiment of the very order of existence. It is an existential commitment, an alignment of the self with the divine decree (*qadar*), where submission (*taslīm*) is not passive surrender but an active participation in the unveiling of truth.

Just as the celestial bodies orbit in obedience to their centers, so too does the spiritual seeker revolve around the axis of divine vicegerency, drawing light from the source that illuminates their inward night. To pledge allegiance is to acknowledge that guidance is not self-generated but received, that knowledge is not claimed but inherited, and that nearness to Allah is not a solitary ascent but a journey walked in the footsteps of those whom He has chosen as beacons. It is the affirmation that in every age, the hand (*yad*) of Allah remains extended through His elect, and to grasp it is to grasp the rope of salvation that leads beyond selfhood into the radiance of divine presence.

May Allah grant us steadfastness (*thabāt*) upon His path, sincerity in our allegiance, and the ability to witness His divine presence eternally.

AN INVITATION TO THE DIVINE LIGHT, PART 2

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL KARKARI

Īmān is entirely about the unseen (*ghayb*). You believe in Allah as the unseen. You believe in the angels as the unseen. All of this belief is based on knowledge, which is informational (*khabarī*). The books are the unseen. You know the Qur'an, but you are only aware of other books in a general sense, as titles of books. Even when you say, "I studied the Gospel and the Torah," you are mistaken, for they are both altered. This means that you do not possess certain īmān, nor the vision of īmān. It remains mere informational *īmān*.

Īmān includes belief in Allah's decree, the good and the bad. What does it mean, "with its good and its bad?" We all believe in the good of it and deny its bad. What does this mean? When we engage in a religious act or seek closeness to Allah, we understand that it brings us nearer to the Exalted Lord. However, when we fall into something harmful, we seek forgiveness and try to remove that harm through repentance, always striving for good. So, we believe in part and deny part.

If you were to say, "No, I believe in the good and in the bad," then why did you commit the bad? So this is all talk. These aspects of *īmān* are the beginning of journeying on the path. For this reason, the people of Allah call *īmān* a "path" (*ṭarīq*) and *islām* "knowledge." Hence, *islām* is *sharīʿa* (prescriptions), *īmān* is a path, and *iḥsān* is a reality (*ḥaqīqa*).

So, if we accept their vocabulary, it wasn't coined arbitrarily or as a mere theoretical idea. No, the one who introduced this word must have understood its purpose. So, what does the word "path" mean? It means a way (*maslak*), a course you must traverse on your journey. As we say in the Opening Chapter (*al-Fātiḥa*) of the Qur'an: **"Guide us to the straight path" (Q 1:6)** So, what does "Guide us to the straight path" mean? It is the path of īmān, which the Prophet ﷺ referred to when he said:

“Faith has over seventy branches. The most excellent is the declaration that there is no god but Allah, and the least of which is removing harm from the path” (Bukhārī; Muslim).

Removing harm from the path means removing harm from your self, because you yourself are the path; you are on the path. As an individual, you are that harm on the path. This does not mean you are removing harm from the physical road, like someone doing the work of a sanitation worker. No, thankfully, those workers exist, and they get paid for their jobs; we don’t need you for that task.

The least branch of faith — removing harm from the path — means removing harm from your own path and your own journey. This means that you have internal harm, harm within your being, harm in a subtle and unseen aspect of your being. If you didn’t have this harm then the Prophet ﷺ would not have mentioned it.

And the most excellent branch of faith is declaring “there is no god but Allah.” Between these two, the Prophet ﷺ described either sixty or seventy-odd various branches, depending on the narration. Both narrations are truthful, divinely inspired, and Muhammadan and Ahmadan. It is not appropriate to discredit either narration. So, why did the numbers differ? You cannot reject either one. But why then does the number differ? That is a secret. If it becomes clear to you, you will praise and thank Allah.

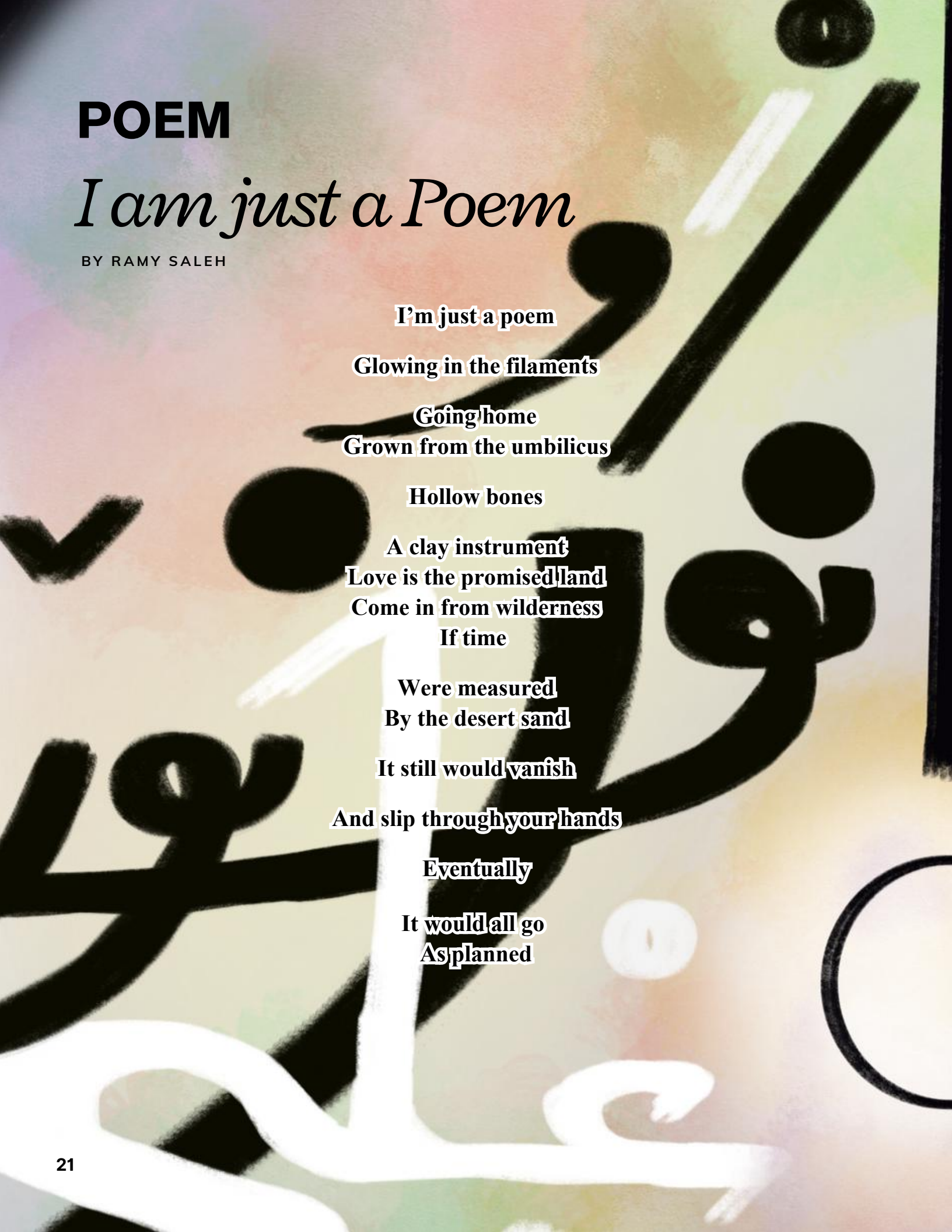
So these branches are the ones you progress through, making you steadfast and drawing closer to “there is no god but Allah.” When you reach the highest branch, you come to understand a form of worship you were not accustomed to before. It’s as if your worship at the level of *īmān* and *islām* is not the same kind of worship that you experience at the station of *iḥsān*, that is, to worship Allah as though you see Him.

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL KARKARI

POEM

I am just a Poem

BY RAMY SALEH



I'm just a poem

Glowing in the filaments

Going home
Grown from the umbilicus

Hollow bones

A clay instrument
Love is the promised land
Come in from wilderness
If time

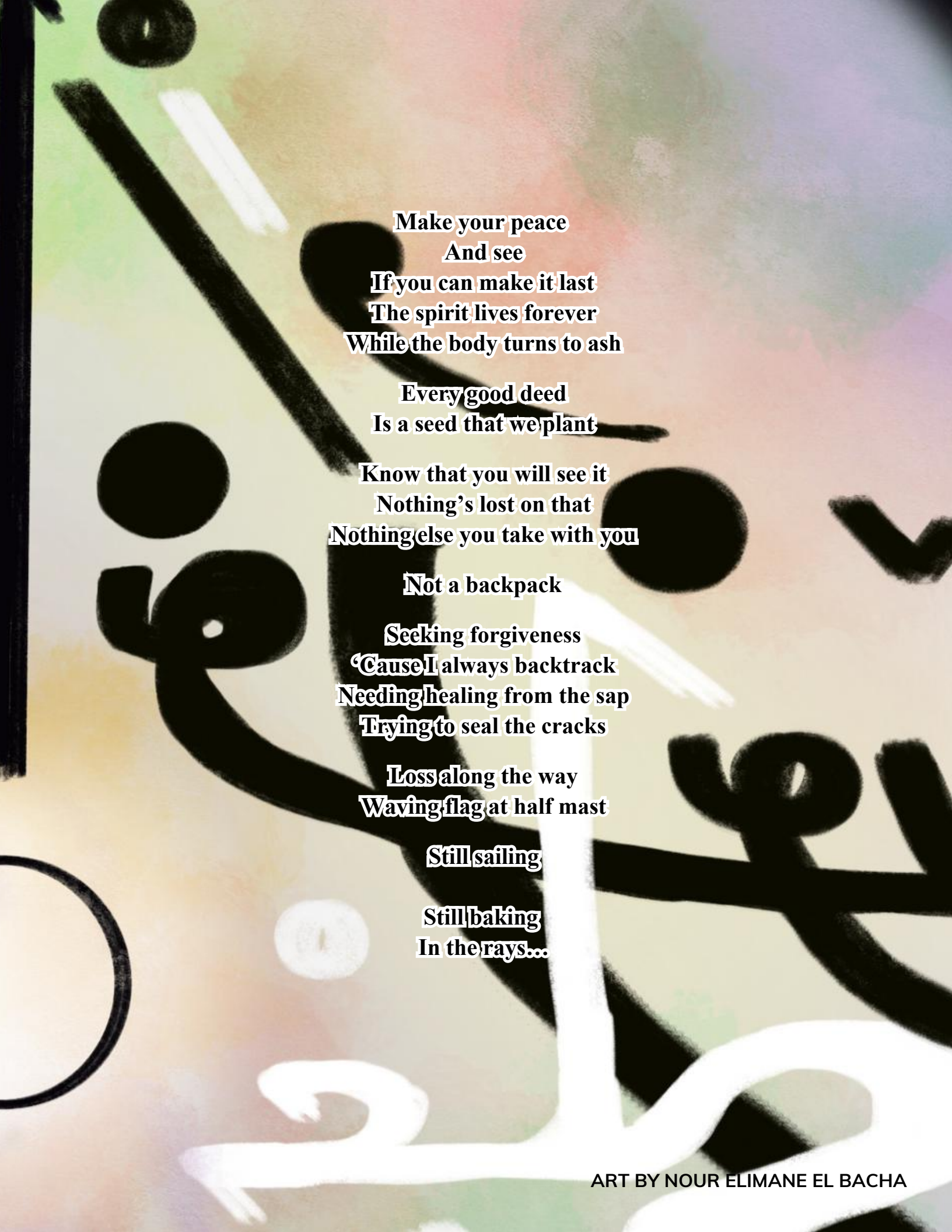
Were measured
By the desert sand

It still would vanish

And slip through your hands

Eventually

It would all go
As planned



Make your peace
And see
If you can make it last
The spirit lives forever
While the body turns to ash

Every good deed
Is a seed that we plant

Know that you will see it
Nothing's lost on that
Nothing else you take with you

Not a backpack

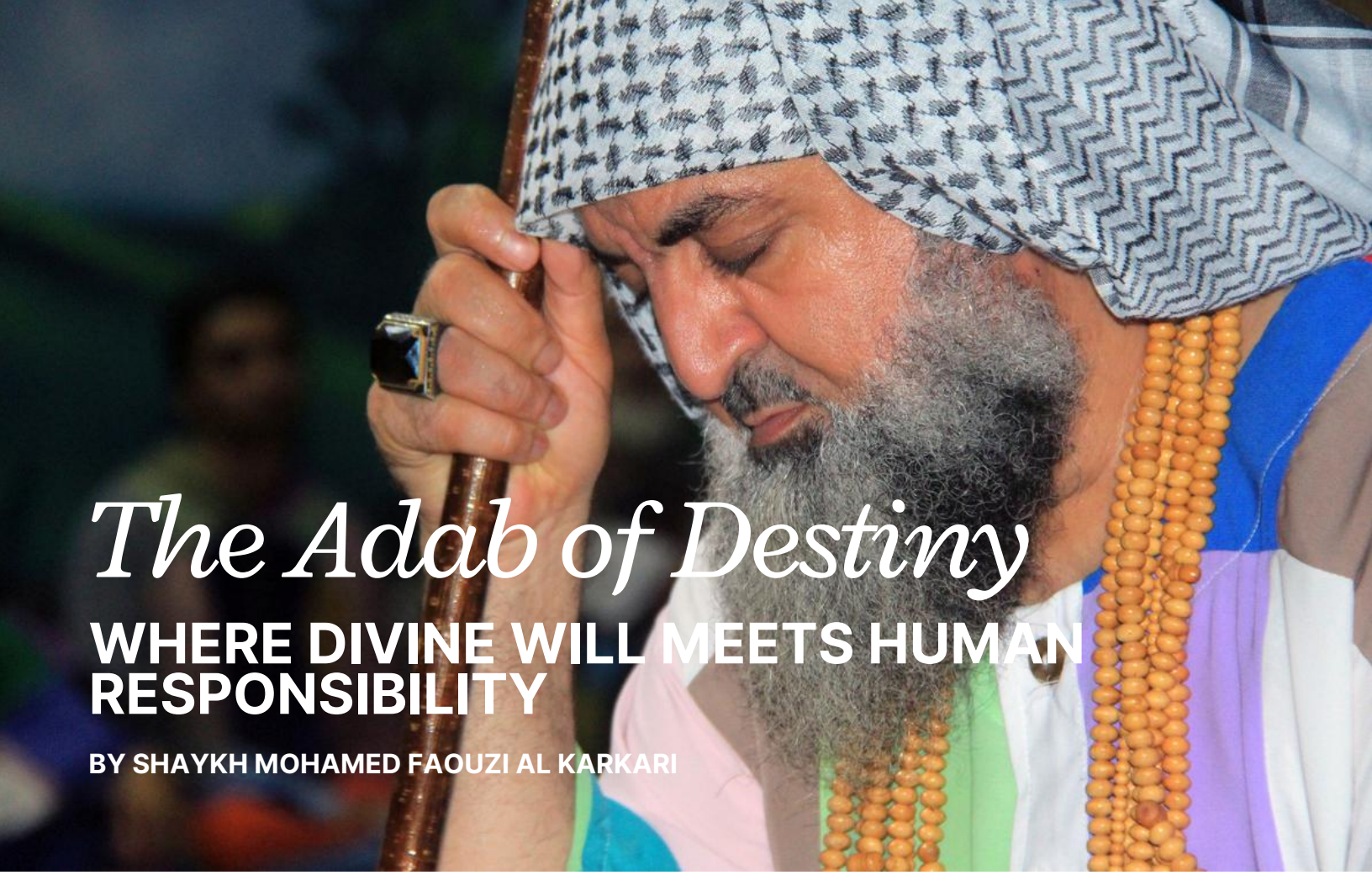
Seeking forgiveness
'Cause I always backtrack
Needing healing from the sap
Trying to seal the cracks

Loss along the way
Waving flag at half mast

Still sailing

Still baking
In the rays...

ART BY NOUR ELIMANE EL BACHA



The Adab of Destiny

WHERE DIVINE WILL MEETS HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL KARKARI

In the name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Especially Merciful.

The following question was presented to Sidi Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari: “It is said that the fall of Adam into error was a matter of Divine Decree (*qadar*) from Allah. If this is so, does a human being possess a will (*irāda*), and what is its place in relation to the Decree of Allah?”

The Shaykh's Response:

Before delving into such a matter, the first step is to learn the proper conduct (*sulūk*) required to avoid falling into poor etiquette (*sūʾ al-adab*) with Allah Most High. The foundational belief (*iʿtiqād*) that you must hold is that any good thing (*hasana*) originates from Allah, and any ill (*sayyiʾa*) originates from your own self (*nafs*).

A servant does not say, “The evil I committed is from Allah.” This is a statement that only the Prophets, peace be upon them, may utter, and there is a specific reason for this. You are commanded to take account of your own self (*tuhāsib nafsak*). before you are taken to account on the Day of Resurrection. Recognize that wrongdoing comes from your own self, while good is a gift (*hiba*) from Allah that your self — being the locus of responsibility — has brought into action. In this way, you maintain the proper etiquette required along the path.

As for the Prophets, they are the people of Divine protection (*ahl al-ʿišma*). What we perceive as a mistake that they fell into is, in reality, for a profound wisdom (*ḥikma*) that Allah intended. The same applies to the family of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him and his household, for the Lord has said: **“Allah only desires to remove from you all impurity, O people of the [Prophet’s] household” (Q 33:33).** This is not my own claim, but an understanding affirmed by many great early scholars. If you doubt this, look to the poems of Imām al-Shāfiʿī regarding the Prophet’s

Household (*ahl al-bayt*). Therefore, if your own self whispers (*waswasa*) to you that these elevated beings erred, know that this thought is from your own self. In reality, their action was for a wisdom that Allah willed.

Let us consider the specific case of Adam, peace be upon him. Had Adam not descended, the comprehensive knowledge of all the Divine Names (*maʿrifat kulliyyat al-asmāʾ*) would have remained inaccessible to him. There were certain Names and Attributes that he had to learn on the earth. Among these realities is that which is alluded to in the divine saying (*hadīth qudsī*), "O son of Adam, I was sick and you did not visit Me…" In the Garden of Paradise, there is no sickness. Therefore, it was necessary for Allah to create for him a "carpet" or a "canvas" (*bisāṭ*) — this earthly realm — upon which he could witness the meaning of this particular Divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*). It was thus necessary for him to descend in order to complete his education.

Furthermore, Allah the Exalted stated His will: **"Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent (*khalīfa*)" (Q 2:30)**. Therefore, Adam's descent was for the purpose of his becoming Allah's vicegerent in His earth. What does it mean to be a vicegerent? It is to be the locus through which Allah's Names and Attributes are made manifest.

Now, you must understand your own position. You are a slave (*ʿabd*) of the Lord. There is a law (*qānūn*) that you are commanded to follow. You have a sacred legal responsibility (*taklīf sharʿī*), and your soul itself possesses the capacity to fulfill it, for Allah Most High has said, **"Allah does not charge a soul except with that within its capacity" (Q 2:286)**.

Therefore, if you fail to perform your obligation, it is not because your soul is unable to bear it, but because your soul (*nafs*) does not desire to.

From this understanding, it becomes necessary for you to say that the good (*ḥasana*) originates from Allah — He decreed it and enabled it — and the evil (*sayyiʾa*) originates from your own lower self. The entirety of the Sacred Law is a responsibility (*taklīf*) that you have the capacity to bear. And out of His mercy, Allah Most High has even established dispensations (*rukhas*) — e.g., allowing one to pray while sitting if they are unable to stand — so that you may fulfill this responsibility, even if not in its most complete form.

This is why Allah Most High says: **"Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy" (Q 35:6)**. The case of Adam was a decreed destiny (*qadar maqdūr*), a matter of cosmic purpose. Your case, however, involves the capacity to defend yourself and resist the whispers of temptation (*waswās*). Thus, when you act upon Satan's whispers, it is you who has committed the crime — and you cannot shift the blame onto predestination or the devil.

The take away is this: You must never say, "This evil was a destiny that Allah decreed for me." To do so is the absolute peak of poor etiquette with Allah Most High. On the contrary, you must discipline yourself with proper manners. You must recognize the good as a pure grace (*minna*) from Allah Most High and praise Him for it. And you must see the fault as your own, turning back to Him in repentance.

A REFLECTION ON THE APPARENT

Contradictions Between Free Will (ikhtiyār) and Predestination (tasyīr)

BY MOHAMED JEDOUI

ART BY NOUR ELIMANE EL BACHA

The Necessity of Atheism and Disbelief for Completing the Manifest Image of Faith and the Emergence of the Illusory World

Abū Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Any matter of significance that is not begun with the remembrance of Allah is cut off — barren (or devoid of blessing)."

This hadith signifies that any matter where the one endowed with choice does not begin with the invocation of Allah's name is severed and bereft. The Arabic term for "cut off" (*abtar*) refers to something that has lost blessing and support, falling outside the sphere of divine mercy. Whoever does not begin their actions with the divine name removes themselves from the extended rope of causes that Allah has linked to His servants, severing that connection entirely.

There is no clearer state of severance than atheism itself. The atheist deliberately chooses severance (*batr*) over connection (*wasl*), dẹnying the divine name and, by extension, the essence it signifies. Thus, they exist in the realm of non-being, vanishing into severance and non-existence by cutting off all paths to the divine name, attributes, and essence. If the believer begins every action with the invocation of Allah's name, affirming existence, then the atheist negates this invocation, affirming non-existence and solidifying severance and non-being. In doing so, the atheist removes themselves from the circle of existence and enters the realm of darkness, divine curse, and misfortune.

Atheism, therefore, stands as the antithesis of belief (*īmān*). Yet through atheism, faith gains meaning, depth, rank, boundary, and manifest distinction. As our Sufi masters have said: "Things are known through their opposites." *Īmān* forms the luminous stations of return toward the ultimate higher truth, both within the microcosm of the self and the veiled macrocosm of existence. Indeed, most, if not all, traditional Muslim exegetes, whether Sufi or otherwise, agree that the fourfold exemplification of divine light represents the light synonymous with the light of īmān that Allah places in the heart of the believer. This exemplification is the very light by which the believer, after witnessing it, progresses toward higher stations of truth — returning to true Being, ascending closer and closer to the absolute luminous essence of Allah, the One solely deserving of the term Existence. Thus, ontologically and cosmologically, the veiled realm of exemplifications — or the unseen realm — is a realm of light and therefore a realm of īmān.

Atheism, in contrast, serves as the foundational stone upon which the lower realm (*dunyā*) was manifested. This world is inherently base (*adnā*), or, as the Qur'an describes it, *aradhāl* (most despicable). It is cursed only because of disbelief and atheism, and its illusory, dark nature becomes evident through them. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "The world is curseḍ, and everything in it is cursed except for three: a knower, a seeker of knowledge, and the remembrance of Allah."

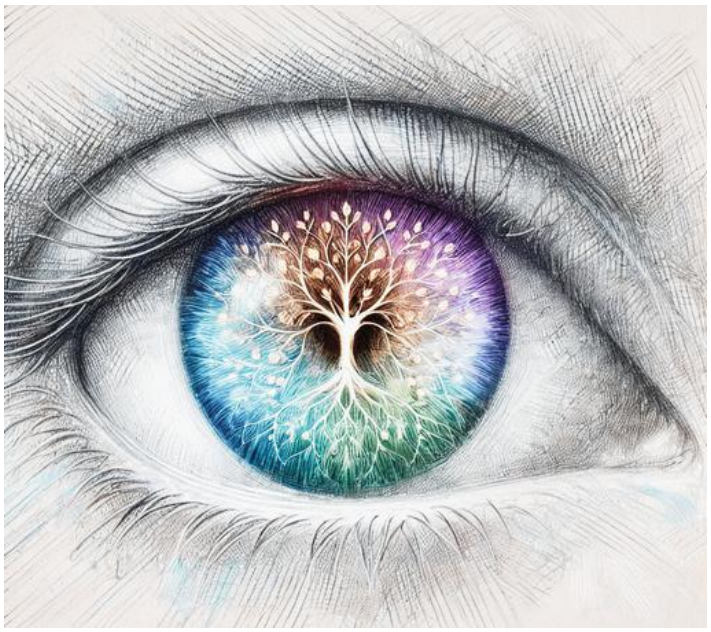
Praise be to Allah, who granted believers the key to navigate the trials of this cursed world through His remembrance, transforming their state from one of accursedness and severance to one of mercy, blessing, and connection.

Disbelief and atheism, as mentioned, serve as the foundation for the manifestation of this lowest realm (*dunyā*). They are the chains that forged the adornments, appearances, and fleeting pleasures, shackling the human essence and spirit, which is tasked with breaking free. The Hereafter, by contrast, is the abode of faith (*īmān*) and submission, where disbelief has no place. In that realm, all dwell in certainty (*yaqīn*), whether in the eternal bliss of paradise or the torment of hellfire.

This brief introduction clarifies why atheism (*ilḥād*) and disbelief (*kufr*) were created and their role in affirming faith and its conditions, as well as in manifesting the lowest and most despicable of things — namely, this world.

Free Will (*ikhtiyār*) and Predestination (*tasyīr*) Between the Perception of Atheists and the Reality of the Divine

One of the strongest arguments atheists employ to deny the existence of Allah is the apparent contradiction between the freedom Allah grants His servants to choose between good and evil (*Islam* or its opposite) and, simultaneously, His predestination of their states. They argue: "How can a God predestine one to hellfire, compel them to commit deeds deserving of such a fate, and then prohibit them from those same deeds in His law? How can He create a person and their actions, whether lawful or unlawful, and then hold them accountable?"



On the surface, this appears contradictory. Yet, inwardly, it is divinely complete, exalted, and transcendent. The apparent contradiction lies solely in the atheist's mind.

Allah created us and our actions. He directs us to our ultimate fate, whether bliss or torment. To claim that Allah cannot create us and our deeds is to deny His divine sovereignty over all things. Such a claim reduces the divine to imperfection — an utter absurdity.

From another perspective, Allah instilled within us a natural disposition (*fiṭra*) that includes the capacity for choice. We make use of causes through a will that appears, on the surface, to arise from our hearts. This intersection of divine determination (*tasyīr*) and human volition (*ikhtiyār*) constitutes the essence of God's transcendence, a matter far beyond the grasp of the human intellect in its finitude.

Simultaneously, Allah knows all of our states, creates our deeds, and grants us the ability to choose. To claim that Allah cannot grant His servants the capacity to choose is to fall into disbelief (*ilḥād*) as well by subordinating divine transcendence to a limited human understanding.

The key to understanding this matter is to realize that Allah, in His transcendence, unites opposites simultaneously: He predestines us (*sayyaranā*) and grants us free will (*khayyarnā*) at once. This divine paradox confounds and incapacitates human understanding, affirming Allah's boundless power over all things. It underscores the distinction between Lordship (*rubūbiyya*) and servitude (*ʿubūdiyya*). Such a profound reality is unveiled only to the knowers of God, those who have been granted access to the innermost secret of the divine presence.

The atheist, however, approaches this matter with their limited, primitive intellect, equating the divine intellect and will with their own. Yet Allah is far beyond the constraints of the limited human intellect. He is the One who astonishes His creation by creating and encompassing opposites simultaneously, thereby transcending the limitations of direction, interpretation, and negation.

Creation, in its imperfection, cannot comprehend or, more precisely, unite opposites due to its finite, beastly nature. The atheist, however, unknowingly projects this imperfection onto the Creator, concluding that Allah cannot encompass opposites simply because the created

cannot do so. This contradiction exists solely within the confines of the limited human intellect and holds no ultimate ontological certainty. It leads the atheist to arrogance, reducing existence to what is immediate and perceptible through their fleeting, constrained senses and limited reasoning. Rather than submitting and acknowledging that something greater than their intellect might exist, they fall into self-glorification and self-deification. This hubris ultimately drags them into darkness, severance, and misfortune in both this life and the Hereafter.

The atheist's conception of the divine is deficient and flawed. Persisting in such a belief leaves them, as described in the Qur'an: **"Like one in utter darkness, not able to emerge from it" (Q 6:122)**.

This applies equally to anyone who rejects the Divine Light (*nūr Allah*), refusing to recognize the balance between divine transcendence (*tanzīh*) and comparability (*tashbīh*). Instead, they cling to conjecture, preference, and personal interpretation, abandoning certainty and illumination. Allah says: **"Is the one who was dead, and We gave them life and a light by which they walk through the people, like the one who is in darkness, never to emerge from it?" (Q 6:122)**.

Atheism, when viewed through the lens of divine wisdom, is therefore not merely a rejection, but a mirror — a necessary foil that reflects the grandeur of faith. Just as darkness defines the brilliance of light, disbelief, which is itself the true darkness, unveils the contours of belief, which is divine light, sharpening its clarity and enhancing its beauty. The atheist and the disbelievers, in severing themselves from the divine, paradoxically affirm its necessity, for even their rebellion serves as a testament to Allah's encompassing reality. This interplay between faith and disbelief is not a contradiction, but a revelation of the divine paradox: the simultaneous unfolding of opposites within a single truth.

To embrace this reality is to step beyond the confines of the intellect, surrendering to the mystery of Allah's transcendence and immanence. Faith, then, is not the certainty of the known in a purely conceptual sense but, at least in its initial stages, the trust in the greater unknowable. It is this light that leads us through the shadows of reason and the darknesses of transgression into the boundless expanse of divine unity. Let the believer take solace in this: the tension between choice and predestination, between belief and denial, serves as a signpost on the journey to the One who transcends all dualities, the One in whom all opposites converge.

TAWAKKUL, NOT TAWĀKUL

Tying Your Camel Before putting your trust (tawakkul) in Allah

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI
TRANSLATED BY MAROUEN JEDOUI

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Listen, you who claim to walk this path. You come with your questions about *tawakkul* (reliance upon Allah) and you think it is a soft pillow upon which you can rest your lazy heads. You have misunderstood. The Qur'an teaches us of *tawakkul*, but what you practice is *tawākul* — a passive, indolent waiting, expecting your needs to be delivered to you on a platter while you do nothing. This is not the way of the strong; it is the way of the idle, a pathetic excuse for inaction veiled in the language of faith.

Look to the master of all creation, the Prophet Muḥammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, during the most critical moment of his mission: the *Hijra* (the Migration from Mecca to Medina). When he and his companion Abū Bakr were in the cave, and the enemy stood at its mouth, did this station of divine intimacy arrive out of nowhere? No! Allah teaches us through His Prophet that you must first exhaust the means (*asbāb*). The Prophet did not simply sit in Mecca and pray for deliverance. He planned. He departed under the cover of night. He traveled a difficult, unknown path. He and his companion took refuge in a cave and sealed it well. He took every conceivable human measure to secure their safety. Only then, after the means had been exhausted and the danger was physically upon them, did the station of pure tawakkul manifest.

It was at that moment, when Abū Bakr's human fear surfaced, that the Prophet said his timeless words: "Do not grieve, for surely Allah is with us." When did he say this? He said it when all material means were gone, when there was nothing left but the sheer presence of Allah.

The Divine Presence came to conceal them from their pursuers. This is the lesson: tawakkul is not the negation of means; it is the courageous application of means, followed by the heart's complete turning to the Causer of all means. You must act in the world as if everything depends on you, and then trust in Allah as if you have done nothing at all.

This is where you stumble. When a provision comes to you through the hand of another, you see the hand and forget the Giver. You see the person who helped you and elevate them, in your heart, to the status of a provider. This is a subtle shirk, an association of partners with Allah. If you see that the person gave you, you have erred. But if you see that Allah is the true Giver who merely used that person as a conduit, you have seen correctly. The one who understands this is one whose migration (*hijra*) is truly from the creation to the Creator

The People of Allah understood this deeply. They would test their own hearts to ensure their connection (*waṣl*) was true. Look at the Prophet Ibrāhīm, who said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." Was he in doubt? No, he said it was **"so that my heart may be at rest" (Q 2:260)**. He sought the certainty that solidifies faith. Look at Maryam, who was tested in her provision. So, if you have reached a state of reliance after taking all the necessary means, it is not forbidden to test your heart to see if you are truly near to Him. But beware! You are not to seek miracles (*karāmāt*) for show. And if a sign (*ʿalāmah*) does come to you, return to reliance on the outward means, as prescribed by the Law. To constantly seek transcendence beyond all causes in every matter is a mark of a heart that is still weak and unsettled.

Your greatest sickness, however, is not a misunderstanding of causality (*asbāb*). It is your cowardice. You live in fear. But what do you fear? Abū Bakr feared the hardened enemies of Islam, the powerful Quraysh who sought to extinguish the light of God. And you? You fear the very Muslim you pray beside in the

mosque. You are afraid of what people will say. You live two lives in one body, presenting a face to the world and hiding another in secret. You wish for happiness and tranquility while living a lie. You want to be among the people of light, but you don't want to be seen wearing the patched cloak (*muraqqaʿa*) — or standing beside someone who wears it. You wish to drink a healing remedy, but you're plagued by anxiety that someone might mistake it for wine. What is wrong with you? Be a man! Be a woman of sincerity (*ṣidq*)! Fear no one but your Lord. Be at peace with yourself.

The one who is sincere has nothing to hide and no one to fear. The real men of God are those who say, "He who denies me and my convictions, it is his affair, not mine." They are governed by the Divine Law (*sharʿ*), not the fickle customs of society. And if doubt enters the heart of such a person, they know the way: perform *istikhāra* (the prayer of consultation) and return to the Lord for guidance.

The one upon whom Allah has bestowed mercy has an unshakable faith. He walks with confidence wherever his soul finds comfort, not hunched over and folded in on himself in fear. Fear Allah, disciples, not the creation of Allah. There is a saying we have: "Fear three: Allah, the one who fears Allah, and the one who does not fear Allah." You have inverted this wisdom and now only fear the insignificant judgments of men.

If your faith were strong, you could sleep amongst criminals, and by the power of your good opinion of Allah (*ḥusn al-ẓann billāh*), He would make them your protectors until morning. Why? Because you are with Allah. When you perfect your opinion of Him, He blesses His dealings with you with beauty and grace. But when your opinion of Him is poor, He treats you accordingly. Your reality is nothing but a reflection of your certainty.

Do you not know the story the gnostics tell about happiness? When Allah sent happiness down to the earth, Satan gathered his followers and asked, "Where shall we hide it from the son of Adam?" One demon suggested hiding it on the highest mountain. "No," Satan replied, "he will eventually climb it." Another suggested the deepest part of the ocean. "No," Satan said, "God may give him the ability to retrieve it." Then a cunning she-devil spoke up: "Let us hide it deep within the human himself, and then we will distract him with worldly temptations so that he never thinks to look for it there." Satan declared, "This is the perfect solution."

And so here you are, spending your entire life searching for happiness in illusions, chasing it in wealth, status, and the approval of others, while it lies buried within

your own soul. Search for it within yourself, and you will find it through the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah. This is why the People of God have told you: "Close your eyes, perform your *dhikr*, and dive into the darkness of your own self. Plunge deep until the Reality (*al-Ḥaqīqa*) dawns, until He appears, and you are annihilated (*fanāʾ*)."

The summary, then, is simple, yet it is the work of a lifetime. Fear the Creator and turn away from the creation. Take the means, but attach your heart to the Causer of means. Purify your intention, be sincere in your state, and abandon your crippling fear of what others think. True *tawakkul* is the attribute of a heart that has found its security in Allah alone. Now, stop asking questions and begin the work.

FLEE TO ALLAH,

Not From Your Life

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL KARKARI

The disciple, in their life, has other attachments. They are not a disembodied being. They study, they work, and they have a family and responsibilities.

This is the very fabric of existence that Allah has decreed for them. When they come to the *zāwiya* (Sufi lodge) of Al Aaroui, touched by the sweetness of the Divine Presence (*ḥadra*) and the love of the fellowship, they are often tempted by a dangerous illusion: that of wanting to abandon everything, to shed all their commitments to remain in this haven of peace. They believe that this is the shortest path to Allah.

Know that this is not the most effective solution; on the contrary, it is an escape and a failure disguised as piety. The Shādhilī Path is, par excellence, the path of the right measure, the religion of moderation. It embodies the prophetic saying: "Work for your life in this world (*dunyā*) as if you were to live forever, and work for your afterlife as if you were to die tomorrow." The accomplished person, the successful disciple, is one who builds their life on balance and equity. They fall neither into the excess of materialism nor into the excess of an asceticism that would render them unfit for life. We repeat this constantly to our disciples: whoever has a business, a trade, or studies, must continue them. Do not let anything fall, for the Path is not meant to make you miss anything that is destined for you.

The spiritual Path does not consist of locking yourself away, cutting yourself off from the world, and becoming a social "cripple," an invalid incapable of

managing your own self and its basic needs. If that had been the model to follow, our pious predecessors — the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the saints who followed them — would all have done it. Yet, they were merchants, artisans, heads of families, and leaders within their communities. They were in the heart of the world, but the world was not in their hearts.

Here, we must distinguish between several levels of spiritual seeking. The one who abandons their worldly life (*dunyā*) to devote themselves exclusively to acts of worship, forgetting their earthly duties, is not a Knower of Allah (*ʿārif*), but a devotee, a worshipper (*ʿābid*). The one who leaves everything, who emigrates far from their responsibilities to live in destitution, is called an ascetic (*zāhid*). These two stations, though respectable, are infinitely inferior to that of the Knower of Allah.

The goal of the Path is not to make you devotees or ascetics in this reductive sense. The Knower of Allah is the one who takes from everything its legitimate share. They lack nothing, for they are the master of moderation (*wasaṭiyya*). They know how to organize their person, their time, their energies. They give every rightful claimant its due: its due to Allah, its due to their family, its due to their work, its due to their own body. They are a microcosm in harmony, reflecting the harmony of the macrocosm.

Take the example of prayer (*ṣalāt*): Allah prescribed it for us five times a day, at specific moments. It does not last all day. Between the prayers, we attend to our other occupations while striving to be conscious of Allah through a personal remembrance of Allah accompanied by the witnessing of divine light. Such is the divine rule. One who deviates from this rule, who abandons everything under the pretext of devoting themselves to Allah, will not only fail in their worldly life, but they will also never reach the station of true Gnosis (*maʿrifa*).

Our supreme model, the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him), worked, traded, and managed the affairs of the community, and then he took

time for intimate worship with his Lord. In the same way, you are asked to take time to be with Allah — through secluded *dhikr* (remembrance), meditation, and reading the Qur'an — but without this annihilating the rest of your worldly affairs.

To believe that you will rid yourself of your worries by remaining cloistered in the *zāwiya* is a grave error in judgment. Your body may be here, but your spirit will be elsewhere, constantly preoccupied with the problems you have fled. You will never be like the one who came with a peaceful mind, having organized and settled their affairs. That one leaves their work without their work missing them, because they have mastered it and are not its slave. You, on the other hand, may have left your job or your studies, but they have not left you. They will continue to haunt you, to obsess you. Your mind will be back where you are from while your body is here.

When you try to perform your *wird* (daily litanies), every *astaghfirullāh* ("I seek Allah's forgiveness") you utter will be a veil hiding a thought for your studies, for your work, for the problems you left unresolved.

The entire duration of your stay here will become a source of distraction and turmoil, and you will derive absolutely no spiritual benefit from it. You will be like one trying to fill a pierced vessel with water. This is what our experience, spanning several decades of guiding souls, has invariably shown us.

There are those who come from abroad having truly "stripped themselves bare" (*mutajarrid*). This does not mean they have abandoned everything, but that they have settled their affairs. They have taken official leave, ensured their family's sustenance, and paid off their debts. This person has brought order to their life. They come with a free heart and a serene mind. That person succeeds. Even a married man with children, if he is organized, if he has earned his wife's blessings and prayers and provided for her needs, he comes and he succeeds. He comes, takes the Light, and returns home transformed and fortified. When such a disciple sits for dhikr, no mental obstacles (*ʿawāʾiq*) come to disturb him. His heart is a pure vessel, ready to receive the divine effusions. It is to such a person that Allah shows to his wife dreams of good augury (*ruʾyā ṣāliḥa*) while he is far away from her. This kind of seeker is the *Barzakhī* (isthmic), *al-Badal*, the one who can stand in the isthmus between the visible and invisible worlds, a spiritual facet of the Truth on earth.

And then there is the other. The one who comes leaving catastrophes behind them: debts, family conflicts, an abandoned job, worried parents. That one has not come seeking Allah. They have fled from fatigue, problems, and responsibilities. They are a fugitive (*fārr*). Their arrival is not part of the quest for Gnosis (*maʿrifa*). We do not work with them on that level. Our first task with them is to send them back to their problems, to help them structure their *nafs* (ego-self), not to teach them the Knowledge of the Creator. Do not confuse the two! A palace is not built on a swamp. The first step is to drain the swamp. The true champion (*fāris*) is the one who confronts their reality, not the one who flees from it.

The Qur'an says: **"So flee to Allah" (51:50)**. Fleeing to Allah means fleeing from disorder to order, fleeing what displeases Allah for what pleases Him. It means: return to your problems and solve them in a way that satisfies Allah.

This fugitive, we call them by their real name: a failure (*fāshil*), not a Knower of Allah. How can they claim to want to manage their relationship with the Creator of the worlds when they are incapable of managing their own daily life? If someone tells you, "You are a failure," and it affects you neither one way nor the other, if you take it lightly, then know that you are officially the greatest of failures.

The day you have resolved this fundamental question, when you have brought order to your material and relational life, then Gnosis will come to you wherever you are. You could sit with the Shaykh for just a brief moment, and you would leave transformed, because you will have acquired the modality, the "how-to" (*al-kayfiyya*). Our role is to remove the "failure" and put in their place a person who is successful in their life.

Coming to the *zāwiya* is coming to Allah and His Messenger (PBUH), but only after having fulfilled one's duties with the utmost care and the best arrangement. It is at that moment that one can step forward with a purified heart and say "Allah" with a truthful word. Never forget that one of the fundamental conditions of repentance (*tawba*) is the restitution of violated rights (*radd al-maẓālim*).

Reflect on the example of our Lady Maryam (Mary), peace be upon her — yes, you who might wish to use her as an argument against my words. She was a woman, not a man; she was not legally responsible for a household. It was her uncle, the prophet *Zakariyyā* (Zechariah), who was in charge of her. When he saw that her sustenance came to her miraculously from Allah, he understood that she held a secret. He asked her for help; he asked for the "modality" (*kayfiyya*) so that he too could have a child. What did she advise him? A retreat (*khulwa*) in the prayer niche (*miḥrāb*) of three days, not a century! And what did Zakariyyā do?

He went out to his people and asked for their help through *tasbīḥ* (the glorification of Allah). He had no problems with the people; he had not fled from any conflicts. On the contrary, he was respected. And because he was respected and had no disputes with them, they helped him in his spiritual quest. If he had been an indebted fugitive and asked them for help, they would have become angry with him.

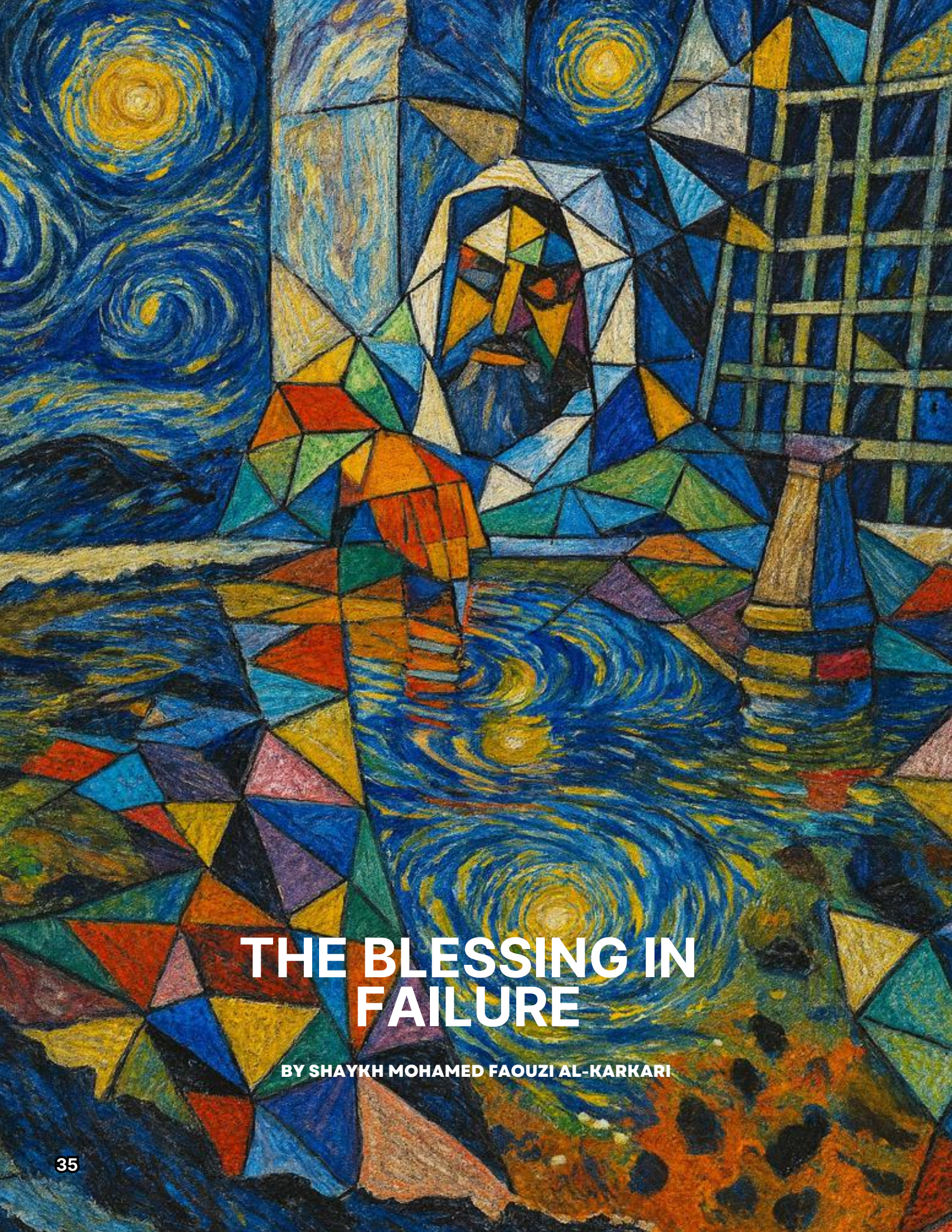
You came here, you took a portion of the divine Light. It is a trust, a responsibility. Now, return and use this Light to help people, to repair your own world. The great Sufi rule says: "Remain where Allah has established you" (*aqim ḥaythu aqāmaka Allah*). He has established you where you are from, with studies, a family, and attachments. That is your battlefield, your field of spiritual struggle. It is there that you must prove yourself.

If we took a spiritually sick individual who has problems with their parents, their job, their spouse, and we gave them another family and moved them to another country, another city, another house, the problem would remain entirely the same. Because the problem is not in the place or the people surrounding them; it is within them. The famous adage is glaringly true: "One who lacks a thing cannot give it" (*fāqid al-shayʾ lā yuʿṭīh*). You, who give advice to others, first look at your own state! You are the one most in need of advice. Your advice will never bear fruit in others, because the seed has not first germinated and borne fruit within you. One first studies to become a teacher, and only then can one teach.

You came to take the Light; you must now return to repair your environment. This begins with an act of supreme humility: asking for forgiveness. Asking forgiveness from the people you have wronged through your negligence, your immaturity, or your flight. Whether it be your spouse, your parents, your colleagues, or even your child who is but a copy of yourself. In doing this, you are not purifying others; you are purifying yourself through this interaction. This is the polishing of the heart through friction with reality.

Concerning your work and your studies, you believe that time was not on your side, that the conditions were bad. When you return with this new perspective, you will realize that the problem was not time, but your own laziness and lack of discipline. And by rectifying this, you will begin to see the Light everywhere: in your work, in the textbook, in the solving of an equation, in the patience required to face a difficulty. This Light was already there, but you had your back turned to it.

The only obstacles (*ʿawāʾiq*) that stand before you are you yourself. It is the way you live, the way you interact with the society that surrounds you. The instruction is therefore clear: go back and sort yourself out. Settle your situation (*rigel nafsak*). Be a person of integrity in your worldly life (*dunyā*), and you will be a person of faith in your spiritual life (*dīn*). Be a champion on the battlefield of your daily life, and you will be a Knower in the Presence of your Lord. The Path begins not with a flight from the world, but with a sanctification in the heart of the world. Succeed there while carrying my light, and you will succeed here. Such is our Path, and there is no other.



THE BLESSING IN FAILURE

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful.

May His most perfect peace and blessings be upon our Master Muḥammad, the ultimate guide through every trial.

In the journey of the soul, there invariably come moments when a human being finds himself overwhelmed by despair. Trials (*miḥan*) descend and settle with a crushing weight upon the heart, and the instinct to flee screams for release. In that state, know this sublime principle of the Path: one must not flee. The seeker must stand firm precisely where Allah has placed him (*aqim ḥaythu aqāmaka Allah*). To remain in the station of one's trial is to begin to witness the wisdom of the One who decreed it.

It is understood that one may need to take a period of reflection, a time to withdraw and assess. We see the state of the seeker who has passed through such a phase. There was a time of worldly ease — a past that seemed to blossom with prosperity, wealth, work, and every apparent good. Yet, in that state of expansion, a deep heedlessness (*ghafla*) veiled the heart, distancing it from the Real. Then, when the outward blessings (*niʿam*) were stripped away and one's condition seemed to deteriorate into ruin, it was in that very moment of desolation that the call to return (*ʿawda*) was heard. This, in its essence, is a profound good. The soul is called to return to its Creator, even if it means remaining with Him within the crucible of hardship.

This forgetfulness and heedlessness during moments of ease and expansion is a weakness common to most human beings, yet we must understand that Allah is lovingly possessive (*ghayūr*) over our souls, desiring them for Himself rather than for the fleeting attachments of the world. Therefore, this constriction (*ḍīqa*), this difficulty, must be seen for what it is: the very cause of return, a hidden grace (*niʿma*) that restores one to their spiritual senses (*rushd*).

When the seeker returns to Allah, the memory of the Path awakens. There is a recollection of having embarked upon this way before, but of having failed to guard it. Perhaps the journey was initiated through imitation (*taqlīd*) of others, and in this, there is no harm, for to imitate the good is a blessed beginning.

The crucial point is the present remembrance that this Path has a right (*ḥaqq*) upon the seeker that was not fulfilled. One sees oneself as having fallen from the way, and now, by His grace, has returned.

We see the immense good (*al-ṣāliḥ*) in this. Once the return has been made, know that Allah has bestowed a great gift, and you have received it well. Earlier this summer, there was the summer *siyāḥa* (spiritual wandering), a foundational principle of the Path. It is a journey undertaken on foot across great distances, where the seeker is made to witness Allah's hand, to realize his own state, and to witness the states of others.

Those who undertake the *siyāḥa* observe men who strive and exert themselves for the sake of Allah Most High, yet still study and work. How is it that such men have succeeded in arriving where others undergoing trials, wishing to return to Allah, have failed?

Know, O seeker of the Real, that the man who practices this balance — fulfilling both the "work of the day," tending to his worldly needs, and the "work of the night," tending to his soul's journey — is successful in both *dunyā* (worldly life) and *dīn* (religion) because he gives each its due. This is unlike the seeker who, during previous periods of ease, forgot the ultimate purpose, Allah Most High.

Through the *siyāḥa*, the wise disciple enduring worldly tests learns from these balanced men, these men of the middle path, who take their portion of this world without sacrificing their portion of the Hereafter.

A vital lesson is learned in the crucible of this experience — a lesson often heard but rarely tasted, which the Prophet, peace be upon him, expressed beautifully: "Work for your world as if you will live forever, and for your Hereafter as if you will die tomorrow." The *siyāḥa* teaches this reality not as an abstract concept, but as a lived experience. It instills the truth that one must be a balanced individual.

Therefore, when problems come, the first movement is to turn our face towards Allah and place our complete

reliance (*tawakkul*) upon Him. We must first forge an unbreakable bond (*ribāṭ*) with the Real, and then, fortified by that connection, we face our challenges. We do not flee. When we are granted the light to see the error within our own selves, this is the beginning of the cure. We must not allow the fault to accumulate out of neglect. When your mistake is made clear to you, the duty is to resolve never to return to it and to make your relationship with your Lord steadfast.

To solve one's problems, one must begin with the small. If there are debts, one starts by paying the smallest, then striving more and more. Despair must not be allowed entry into the heart, for the soul has passed through a period of expansion (*basṭ*) before. The Lord who was Generous in the beginning will be Generous in the end. He is the All-Generous (*al-Karīm*), who grants the self-knowledge (*maʿrifa*) needed to recognize, through the trial, one's faults and neglect of his primary goal: Allah and His path. Therefore, the trial is nothing but benefit, nothing but grace and blessing.

One must not remain stagnant in despair but must strive to change one's state. To declare, "I am a failure," is not a remedy; it is an affliction. In the ultimate sense, there is no one who is truly "successful" in a final way, for we are all, in a sense, "failures" in that we could always reach higher. This realization should be a motivation, not a condemnation.

Our focus must be on the messages (*rasāʾil*) of the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*). As for wealth, it comes and goes. The foundation of our Path (*ṭarīqa*) is true companionship (*ṣuḥba*); we remain companions on the path whether wealth is present or absent. We are not affected by such externalities. A great wisdom unfolds in the trial: When wealth was present, perhaps one fled from true companionship; when it was gone, one returned. In this, the seeker finds those who love him for his essence (*li-dhātika*), not for the transient world he once inhabited. This is a chance to build a new life, a new spiritual orbit (*falak*), choosing friends (*akhillāʾ*) who bring one closer to Allah, not those who are a weight and a burden (*ʿāla*).

May the Lord grant a magnificent opening (*fatḥ*) to all of us. One should rejoice in this state, for through it, inner sight (*istibṣār*) has been gained, even if its full dimensions are not yet understood. In this return, the heart becomes attached to the celebration of the Master of Humanity, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, as we approach Prophet's *Mawlid* (Birthday). When all other doors close, his door is always open. Here is where the true guide is found, and through him one discovers true friendship, for he is the ultimate measure by which a man bases his relationships and chooses his companions.

Therefore, know with certainty that as long as we walk the path with sincerity, we are always successful. The seeker is successful precisely because he has come to know his own spiritual illness and, most importantly, has learned which door to knock upon. O you disciple who is struggling because the dunyā has turned away from you — you were never a failure. You merely needed this turn of the cycle (*dawra*) to truly know the way. The only requirement now is to be sincere (*ṣādiq*), for sincerity is the light that illuminates the path ahead.

THE GIFT OF SAINTHOOD: "MERCY TO THE WORLDS"

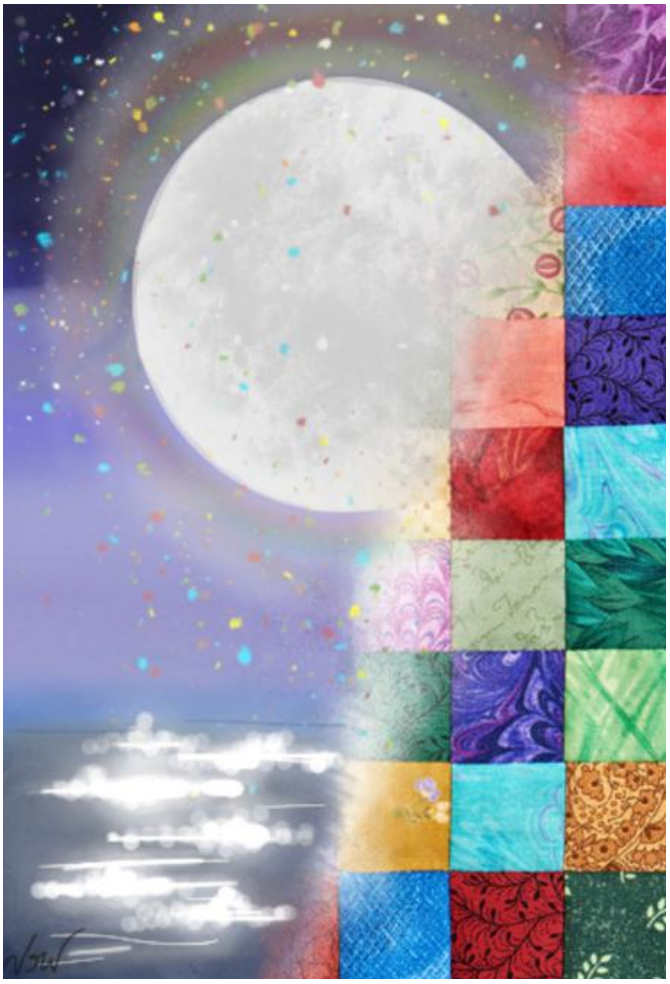
BY NOUR ELIMANE EL BACHA

The greatness of sainthood manifests in countless forms, in both tangible and intangible blessings that descend upon the seeker throughout their spiritual journey. These blessings reveal the seeker's helplessness, exposing the depths of their heedlessness and shortcomings. The further they progress, the more they realize that what they once believed to be knowledge was merely shadows of a higher truth and that the path to Allah can only be walked with complete humility and detachment before the Majesty of the Divine.

The first gift bestowed upon the seeker through sainthood is the descent of Divine Light into their heart. This light is like a sacred seed that grows and blossoms amidst the darkness of the heart.

fleeting sensation but rather the essence of purity, a mark of sainthood upon the seeker, and a distinguishing sign in their journey to Allah. Over time, the seeker comes to understand that this light within their heart is a sublime manifestation of eternal purity, a profound secret emanating from the grand divine reality.

As this light begins to spread within, the seeker finds themselves ascending in moral ranks, acquiring virtues they had never known before. They feel a natural inclination toward humility, appreciation, and respect for others, to the point that they no longer see themselves as superior to anyone. Just as the sun rises and dispels the darkness of the night, the light of sainthood removes the stains of heedlessness from the heart and replaces bad habits with noble qualities that emerge only through the spiritual support of their guide and mentor.



One of the first lessons the seeker learns on their spiritual journey is self-effacement and the elevation — not in a degrading manner but in recognition of true servitude. Respecting and honoring people, and viewing them with love, is the foundation of self-purification and the gateway to inner reformation. The more the seeker humbles themselves, the purer their soul becomes. As their ego dissolves, the lights of mercy and love manifest more vividly within them.

This sacred light placed in the seeker's heart is not just a fleeting spiritual feeling but the key to their righteousness and elevation. It guides them along the paths of truth, teaching them to see beauty in everything, even in the smallest details of life. It allows them to feel the presence of Allah in every atom of existence. Over time, they find their chest expanding with emotions they had never experienced, tasting spiritual sweetness that makes them more merciful and gentle.

As the divine light intensifies within the seeker's heart, they transform from a mere individual navigating through life into a radiant being of righteousness. No longer do they see themselves as the center of existence; rather, they feel a deep sense of annihilation in Allah's love, becoming part of the cosmic order moved by divine wisdom. With this transformation, their gentleness and kindness increase to such an extent that they hesitate to step on a small plant or harm a weak insect, for their heart now understands that mercy is not merely a virtue — it is the very essence of existence itself.

Thus, sainthood lifts the seeker from the darkness of selfishness and ignorance to the light of purity and awareness, making them a beneficial presence in their community. They live with love, walk the earth in peace, neither harming nor being harmed, with a heart full of light, a mind immersed in wisdom, and a soul swimming in realms of tranquility and certainty.

And this is the greatest gift that sainthood grants the seeker: to free them from the prison of the self into the vast horizons of the spirit, from the darkness of desires into the light of guidance, and from servitude to the world into the station of closeness to the Divine.

ART BY KHALED JEDOUI

POEM

Hold The Rope Tight

Oh seekers of truth, when you behold a glimmer of light,
Be it ever so small, in the darkness of the night,
Embrace it with all your might, and hold it close and tight,
For it carries the power to vanquish your ego's fight.

Honour your allegiance with the Shaykh, and hold on to
The rope of Allah, no matter how harsh the storm may brew.
Jump into the ocean of light, like Prophet Yunus of old,
To seek refuge from your nafs, and let your spirit unfold.

Jump into the loaded ship of faith, like the companions did,
With Prophet Noah, trusting what the divine bid.
For they were small in numbers, like Sidi Shaykh's mureeds,
With luminous hearts, devoted to the path of righteous deeds.

Let not the distractions of this world lead you astray,
But hold on to the rope of Allah, and let your heart obey.
Let the light of truth guide you through the darkest of days,
And lead you to a place of peace, where your heart can stay.

So honour your allegiance with the Shaykh, and hold on to the rope,
Of Allah, and let your spirit soar to the summit of hope.
For in the ocean of light, you will find your true home,
And your heart will be at rest, no longer feeling alone.

POEM BY DAUD AHMED

THE INSEPARABILITY OF ESSENCE AND ATTRIBUTES:
THE PATH TO TAWḤĪD

BY MAROUEN JEDOUI

Light is the attribute that reveals the essence and serves as the vehicle carrying the divine names and attributes in the divine disclosure. Indeed, Allah says: **"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth"** (Q 24:35). In the Karkari Path, as in all preceding Shadhilī orders, the disciple journeys to the truth through the all-encompassing name Allah, which points to the divine essence (*dhāt*). Within this school, if one seeks the essence, light acts as a general intermediary between them and the essence. If one seeks a specific facet of God — one of His names or attributes for a particular need — then the light operates through the power of that specific name or attribute.

However, as our Shaykh, Sidi Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari (may Allah sanctify his secret), teaches, the disciple cannot separate the names and attributes from the essence, as doing so leads to misguidance (*ilḥād*). But what does it mean to separate the essence from the attributes?

Separating the essence (*dhāt*) from the attributes (*ṣifāt*) implies viewing Allah's essence as independent of or disconnected from His actions (*afʿāl*), names (*asmāʾ*), and attributes. This is a theological error. In the Sufi understanding, Allah's essence is one and the same as His names and attributes; He is not distinct from them. They are expressions of His essence.

When the name *Allah* — which points to the essence — is revealed, all actions, predicates (*aḥkām*), names, and attributes of Allah are concealed (*tastatir*) by the majesty and exclusivity of this name. However, at the level of disclosure (*tajallī*), the names, attributes, predicates, and actions manifest and become apparent in the niche of divine identity (*huwiyya*), symbolized by the letter *hāʾ* in the divine name. Approaching the divine

from the perspective of disclosure — the *hāʾ* — allows one to witness facets of divinity, offering delimited (*muqayyad*) understandings — symbolized by the closed circular shape of the letter *hāʾ* — of Allah through His revealed qualities.

However, if one severs these disclosures from the essence they unveil, they risk falling into misguidance (*ilḥād*), akin to affirming two gods: one who accepts comparability (*tashbīh*) and another who is completely transcendent (*tanzīh*). In reality, Allah is one, without a partner.

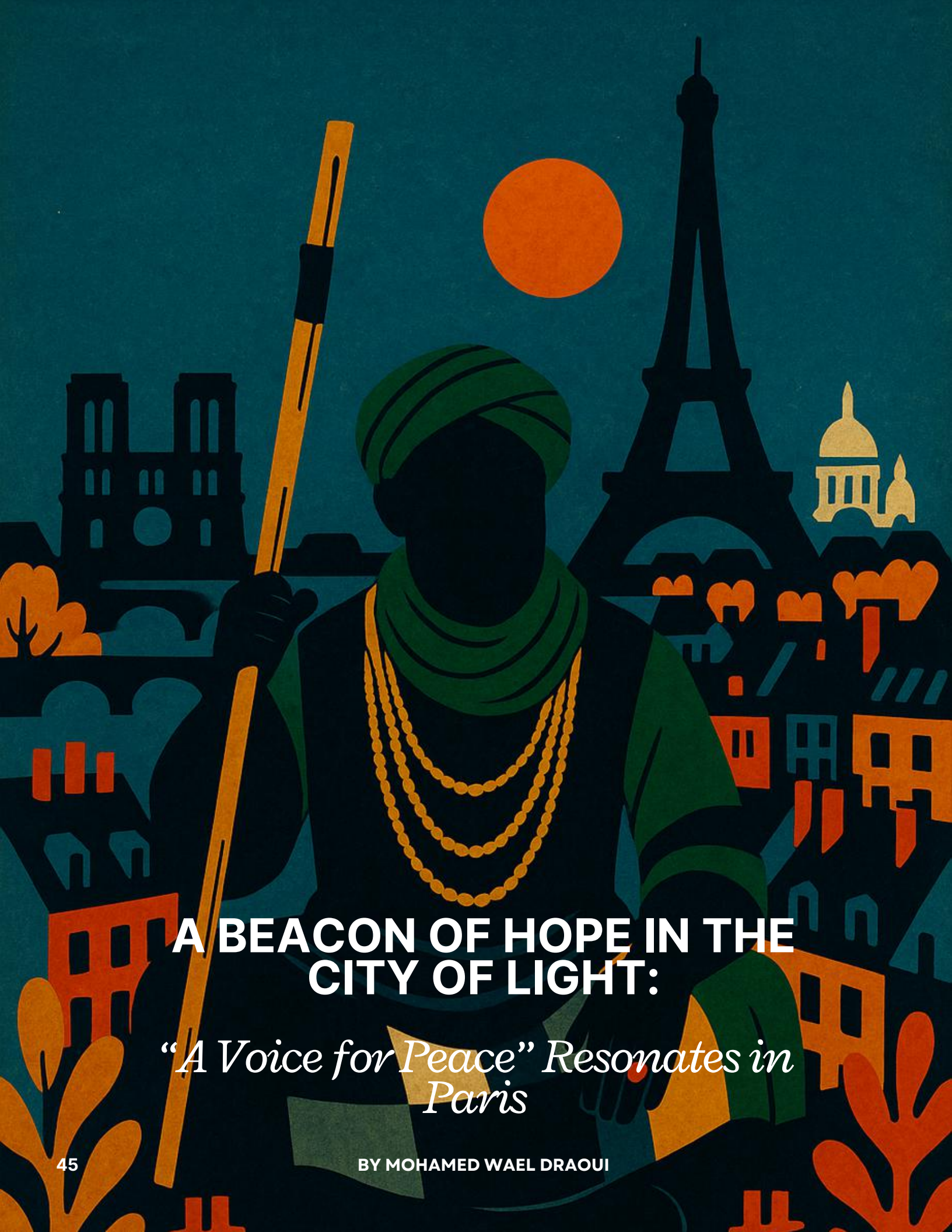
To illustrate this idea, consider the human being; as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Allah created Adam in His own image" (Bukhārī no. 6227; Muslim no. 2841). For example, consider yourself as a person. Your body is one of your disclosures. When I see your body, I say, "This is you." I cannot separate your body and its properties from the inner essence that resides in the mystery of your heart. To claim that your body and the attributes it expresses is not you would render you unrecognizable, as it is through this outward form that your inner essence is apprehended and expressed in a comprehensible way.

Similarly, Allah says: **"There is nothing like His likeness (*laysa ka mithlihi shay'*), and He (*huwa*) is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing" (Q 42:11).** In this verse, Allah affirms both His transcendence and the comparability of His disclosure revealed in the niche of divine identity (*huwa*).

Consider the divine names and attributes like Mercy (*raḥma*) or Power (*qudra*). These are not external to, different from, or added to Allah's essence. Rather, they are simultaneously concealed within the essence while also manifesting it in ways that allow limited beings to comprehend aspects of the divine reality. Divine actions, predicates, names, and attributes are relational — they provide a way for finite creation to witness and experience the divine essence in ways suited to their capacities.

Attempting to separate the essence from the names and attributes reduces God to an abstract, unknowable concept, detached from the immanent nature of His self-disclosures (*tajalliyāt*). This undermines the unity (*tawḥīd*) of God and leads to theological imbalances. The essence is the source — the unchanging reality, the ocean of stillness — while the attributes are both concealed within its vastness and serve as dynamic modes through which it is revealed and experienced in the niche of existence, referred to as the "*hāʾ* of divine identity" (*hāʾ al-huwiyya*). Recognizing their inseparability preserves the balance between transcendence (*tanzīh*), immanence/comparability (*tashbīh*), and ultimately, the true understanding of monotheism (*tawḥīd*).

Ultimately, such realization should not remain theoretical but must arise from luminous disclosures, as light is what reveals Allah through His names and attributes in the niche of existence. Delving into these realities while constrained by the forms of the lower world (*dunyā*) and lacking the epistemological means to grasp them is dangerous and can lead to grave errors. Those who have not witnessed these realities should refrain from discussing them and adhere to the foundational principles of the Ashʿarī creed, affirming literally everything the Qur'an states, delegating (*tafwīḍ*) the true meaning to Allah without falling into the trap of reductionist metaphorical or rational reinterpretations (*taʾwīl*).



A BEACON OF HOPE IN THE CITY OF LIGHT:

"A Voice for Peace" Resonates in Paris

BY MOHAMED WAEL DRAOUI

Paris, France – In a world too often defined by division and discord, a resonant call for unity, tolerance, and peace echoed through the heart of Paris. On the evening of Tuesday, April 8, 2025, the inaugural "Une Voix pour la Paix" (A Voice for Peace) event unfolded at the 360 Paris Music Factory, drawing together a diverse tapestry of individuals committed to fostering a culture of profound understanding and shared responsibility. Organized by the association Les Compagnons, this landmark gathering served as a potent testament to the enduring human aspiration for a more harmonious world.

Conceived to champion interreligious dialogue and spiritual fraternity, the event was founded on the essential idea of elevating the voices of "peacemakers"—those who tirelessly work to build bridges and heal divisions. The sold-out venue welcomed nearly 200 guests, a vibrant assembly of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, alongside artists, intellectuals, activists, diplomats, and elected officials, all convened by a common purpose. The distinguished presence of the Moroccan Ambassador to France, Samira Sitaïl, underscored the evening's international significance.

A Symphony of Peacemakers

The program featured a lineup of eminent speakers, each a respected voice in their field. Among them was Alain Krief, Vice-President of the Culture and Interreligious Dialogue Commission of the Central Consistory of France, and Gérard Testard, the visionary founder of the Christian association EFESIA and the "Ensemble avec Marie" (Together with Mary) movement, which fosters spiritual dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

The stage also welcomed Latifa Ibn Ziaten, a Franco-Moroccan activist and a powerful voice against radicalization as the founder of the Imad Association for Youth and Peace. Also speaking was Rachida Kaaout, President of the High Commissariat of African Diasporas in France, an organization dedicated to strengthening ties between the diaspora and the African continent.

Interspersed with these compelling addresses was a rich tapestry of artistic performances—a testament to the power of art to transcend cultural and religious boundaries. The audience was treated to soulful melodies from artists including Abbas, Farid El Hayami, Founé Diarra, Papa Gims, Alilou, Udeyfa, Frédéric Zeitoun, Mouhamadou, and Laurent Couson, whose music cultivated an atmosphere of shared humanity and celebration.

A Distinguished Voice for Peace: The Address of Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari

Among the esteemed keynote speakers was Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, the spiritual guide of the Karkariyya Sufi order and founder of the al-Karkari Institute for Sufi Studies. A globally recognized Moroccan Sufi master, author, and lecturer, he has been an invited speaker at prestigious academic institutions such as Yale, Stanford, Harvard, Berkeley, and the University of Chicago, and is also renowned for his extensive humanitarian work.

Shaykh al-Karkari delivered a profound and moving address on the spiritual essence of peace. He began by framing his very presence as being compelled by this singular, vital principle. For him, peace (al-salām) is not merely an ideal but one of the most beautiful names and attributes of God Himself.

He eloquently connected the diversity of the gathering to the Qur'anic imperative for humanity to know one another (Q 49:13), emphasizing the sacred duty to respect all faiths, cultures, and fellow human beings.

Here is the full translation of Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari's speech:

Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God and His blessings.

"In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of all worlds, the Most

Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Judgment. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path, the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned Your anger, nor of those who are astray" (Q 1:1-7).

In the Name of God… and there is no power nor strength except in God, the Most High, the Most Great.

We extend our gratitude to the brothers who invited us to this assembly. We ask God to make it a blessed and radiant gathering, illuminated with the Light of the All-Merciful for everyone present, O Most Generous of the generous.

When I decided to come—and my wife supported me in this journey—it was for a matter of supreme importance: peace. Every person who has spoken from this stage has expressed their own state and relationship with peace, and their unique vision of it. For us, Peace (al-salām) is one of the beautiful names of God. Therefore, in coming here, we have come to the name of God; we have come to an attribute of God. As for our presence in France, we consider it a second home for many of our Moroccan and African brothers and sisters. We share a bond with this nation; therefore, we rejoice in its joys and grieve in its sorrows.

This meeting was organized by our brothers to give a voice to peace. Peace is the soundness of the heart; whoever possesses a peaceful heart accepts others as they are. This is because God, Glory be to Him, says: ***'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you' (Q 49:13).***

Here we are, gathered in this place from many tribes and peoples, coming to know one another across the spectrum of different languages and religions. Perhaps some might wonder, 'Why have I, as a Muslim, come here?' The answer is rooted in the very essence of my faith. My Lord, Glory be to Him, declares in His Book: ***'There is no compulsion in religion'*** *(Q 2:256). This divine principle is not a passive statement; it is a direct command that makes it our sacred duty to respect all beliefs, all religions, all cultures, and all our brothers and sisters.*

Beyond this duty, we have gathered here for an even deeper reason: for the love of God, and for the love of God's very name. It is this love that illuminates our path. The Creator, Glory be to Him, asks: ***'Is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him a light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, from which he cannot exit?'*** *(Q 6:122). This light is peace. Peace is not just a word uttered by the tongue; it is a lived experience, a divine gift to the heart. Peace is seeing this gift reflected upon all horizons and seeing it in your brother, just as the Prophet ﷺ said: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" (Bukhārī; Muslim). This is a love for the sake of God — to love your brother and to desire for him what you desire for yourself.*

We are all brethren, descendants of Adam and our mother Ḥawwāʾ. Our Lord, Glory be to Him, commands us to

forgive and calls us to forgiveness, peace, and love. We were not created in vain; God created us only out of His love for us. Had He not loved us, He would not have created us. And when He created Adam, He made him a steward upon the earth. A steward for whom? For God, Glory be to Him, to represent Him through His names, His attributes, and His actions.

So if you truly wish to raise the banner of peace, then we must see it manifest in your actions, your words, and your love for others. It is not a term to be spoken today and forgotten tomorrow. We must make this word our very life. The Chosen One ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge from which benefit is derived, or a righteous child who prays for him" (Muslim).

Therefore, I urge you, O seeker of peace, strive to work on these three things, or at least on one of them. Strive to raise a righteous child who will pray for you—whether a son, a student, a learner under your care, or anyone for whom you are responsible. Leave this symbol behind you, praying for mercy and forgiveness for you. Or seek knowledge from which benefit can be derived, for knowledge that does not benefit others cannot be an instrument of peace. We yearn for a knowledge rooted in peace, we yearn for a progeny nurtured in peace, and we yearn for a charity that establishes peace for us on earth. This is what we so desperately need today.

We are all one family, and we were created for peace. We want to live in peace and security. Peace be upon you and the mercy of God.

Final Words of Wisdom

As the "Une Voix pour la Paix" event drew to a close, participants offered a final word. Among the most powerful was a concluding reflection from Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, who gave a final blessing that distilled the core message of brotherhood and inner peace:

Thank you all. I speak of peace in an eloquent Moroccan Arabic tongue, and I convey to you the peace of all of Morocco, the peace of all Arabs, and the peace of all Muslims. O God, make us people of peace who are submitted to You, O Most Merciful of the merciful, and keep us on Your covenant in this world and the next, until the Day of Judgment.

In truth, each person is a mirror to their brother. One who sees peace does so because of the soundness of their own heart. One who sees love for others does so because of the love God has planted within their heart, and one who harbors hatred does so because of their own poor character. Whoever does not regard others as brothers has no spiritual breath, for one must possess a breath and breathe love and peace into their brother. O God, make us worthy of this.

Thank you to Sidi Sami, Sidi Mohammed al-Soussi, and to all those present, women and men. Welcome to the circle of peace. May it remain a circle that continues forever, by the dignity of the Truth, Glory and Exalted is He, O Merciful One. Peace be upon you.

INTERVENANTS
Une voix pour la Paix
1ère ÉDITION
- UN ÉVÉNEMENT DE DIALOGUE ET DE PARTAGE
- INTERVENTIONS : PRISES DE PAROLE DE PERSONNALITÉS ENGAGÉES
- PERFORMANCES ARTISTIQUES : MUSIQUE, CHANT, HUMOUR ET TRADITIONS CULTURELLES
- UN MOMENT UNIQUE POUR S'INSPIRER, SE RASSEMBLER ET CÉLÉBRER LA DIVERSITÉ
GÉRARD TESTARD, MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI, ALAIN KRIEF, NABIL SAMA, SANDRINE MANSOUTRE, LATIFA IBN ZYATEN, RACHIDA KAAOUT
+ des performances artistiques exceptionnelles viendront enrichir notre événement, offrant des moments inoubliables à tous les participants.
8 AVRIL 2025 À 19H - SALLE LE 360 PARIS

From a Single Note to a Lasting Harmony

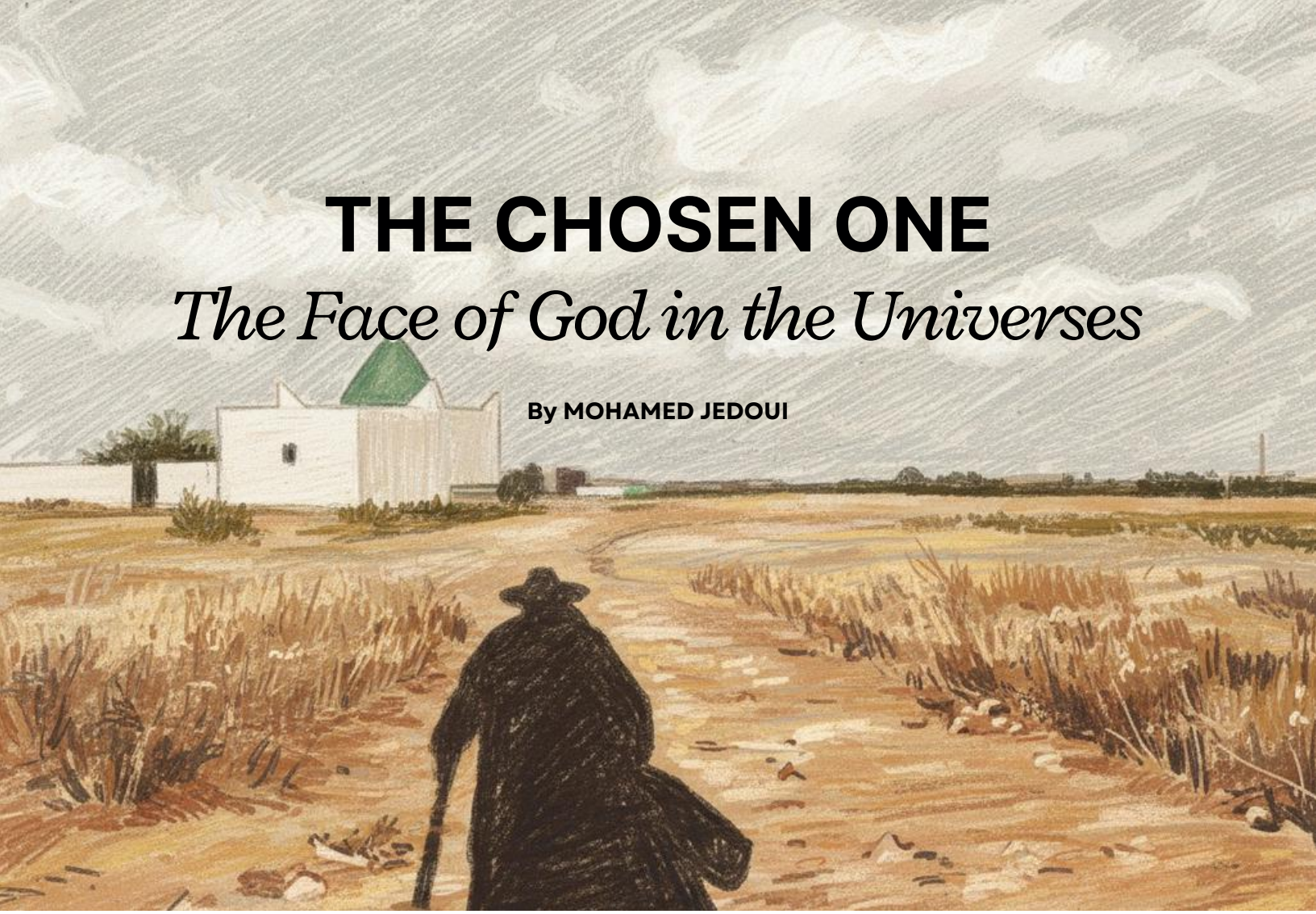
Beyond serving as a platform for dialogue, “Une Voix pour la Paix” is a commitment to action. It aims to provide tangible support to populations affected by armed conflicts, with a portion of the funds raised dedicated to NGOs and local initiatives focusing on humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, peace education, and psychological support for victims of trauma.

The event’s vision extends far beyond a single evening in Paris. There are ambitious aspirations to replicate this gathering in Africa and on other continents, and to organize workshops on interreligious, political, and social dialogue in priority neighborhoods to actively foster a culture of peace from the ground up.

The first edition of “Une Voix pour la Paix” did more than just gather diverse voices; it wove them together in a common cause. By championing peace not merely as a concept, but as a lived action, a profound experience, and a divine attribute — and by celebrating those who strive to build it — the event laid a hopeful and harmonic foundation for a movement destined to resonate far into the future.

THE CHOSEN ONE

The Face of God in the Universes



By MOHAMED JEDOUI

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

In the name of Allah, Who is far removed from the attributes of coming into existence and the qualities of deficiency. Glory be to Him, He is not bound by obligation, nor is He limited by possibility. He is the One and Only in His Essence; there is no other with Him, nor is there anyone like Him. Peace and blessings be upon the outpouring of absolute beauty, concealed within the seed of the Muḥammadan reality, manifested through the blessed olive tree, illuminating the dawn of the ultimate reality (*ḥaqīqa*) at the core of the Karkariyya spiritual presence (*ḥaḍra*).

Indeed, Allah the Almighty has chosen from humanity messengers and prophets to guide people away from the most severe and heinous of sins, that is, associating partners with Him (*shirk*) and worshiping others outwardly. And He has chosen the saints (*awliyāʾ*) and the Knowers of Allah (*ʿārifīn*) to guide the believers out of the darkness of associating partners with Him and worshiping others inwardly.

The people of Allah have always followed the righteous shaykhs (*al-awliyāʾ al-ṣāliḥīn*), the inheritors of the spiritual presence (*ḥaḍra*) of the greatest Prophet (peace be upon him), to emerge from the darkness of fleeting worldly desires into the eternal light of permanence (*baqāʾ*). They have made the realization of the permanence (*baqāʾ*) of the People of Spiritual Distinction (*ahl al-iṣṭifāʾ*), the Prophet's progeny (*ahl al-bayt*), their guiding compass in the journey toward annihilation (*fanāʾ*). So why do the people of Allah continually remind both the general public and the elite that everything is perishable except for the Chosen One (*al-Muṣṭafā*), peace and

blessings be upon him, and his spiritual progeny?

The light of our master, Sidi Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, may Allah sanctify his secret, offers an answer to this question directly from the Holy Qur'an, clarifying a matter that has sparked controversy among Muslims. On one side are the Sufis, who openly declare that *al-Muṣṭafā* and his progeny are alive and do not die; on the other side are those with hardened hearts who claim, God forbid, that *al-Muṣṭafā* is merely a servant like any other, neither bringing benefit nor causing harm, and that the words of the people of Allah are acts of blasphemy (*kufr*) and *shirk*.

Allah the Exalted says in His Wise Book: **"And do not invoke with Allah another deity. There is no deity except Him. Everything is in a state of destruction (hālik) except His Face. His is the Judgment, and to Him you will be returned" (Q 28:88)**.

Indeed, Allah the Almighty is Alive and never dies. He exists independently, exalted above intermediaries that do not rise above causes and decrees. He exists, and nothing exists alongside Him. He is the One without any partner in His dominion. Thus, everything that appears to the limited eye as multiplicity is merely an illusion of imagination, shaped by the constraints of a perception inclined toward associating others with Him. Whenever a servant perceives benefit (*nafʿ*) in something other than Allah, it is as though they have associated it with Allah. This is why He said: **"And do not invoke with Allah another deity. There is no deity except Him."**

Allah the Almighty has annihilated all things before their emergence; they are eternally perishable. He says, **"Everything is in a state of destruction,"** not "Everything will be destroyed" or "Everything was destroyed." Therefore, all things have no true existence, even within the construct of time. They did not exist in the past such that one can say, "The thing was destroyed," nor do they have existence in the future for one to say, "The thing will be destroyed."

All things are destroyed and annihilated in every time and place, meaning they exist only as illusions within the perishing mind (*al-ʿaql al-hālik*).

However, Allah has excluded His Face from that destruction. He said, **"Everything is in a state of destruction except His Face."** This means that everything is an illusion except for one reality: His Face. Thus, there must be a manifest "thing" within the realm of nothingness, revealing the Face of the Creator, distinct from all else in that it does not perish. This eternal entity, free from perishing, acts as a signifier (*dāl*) pointing toward the Essence of Allah, the signified (*madlūl*).

Allah uses the term "Face" (*wajh*), which in Arabic denotes a facade or representative. For instance, we say, "This person is the 'face' of the institution," meaning they are its representative or its highest example. Therefore, there is no doubt or difficulty in saying that the Sacred Face of Allah is embodied by our master *al-Muṣṭafā*, peace and blessings be upon him.

For those who find this concept strange, let them consider the words of our master Ibn ʿAbbās, may Allah be pleased with him, in the hadith: "The Black Stone is the Right Hand of Allah on Earth. Whoever touches it and kisses it, it is as if they have touched and kissed the Right Hand of Allah."[1]

If the Black Stone, suspended in the corner of the *Kaʿba*, is considered the Right Hand of Allah on His Earth, then what can be said about our master, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him? His honor is unparalleled among all creation.

1- ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, al-Muṣannaf. This work serves as the primary source, attributing the ḥadīth to Ibn ʿAbbās (may Allah be pleased with him). Additionally, Ibn ʿAsākir's Tārīkh Dimashq also attributes the ḥadīth to Ibn ʿAbbās, though with a different chain of transmission, mentioning Jābir as the source.

Furthermore, Allah did not specify in the verse, “The Face of Allah on Earth,” but rather made a general statement regarding His Face, indicating that it permeates all universes and realms. This is a reality without limit, imperishable, and transcending the constraints of time and space, even if it appears confined to human perception due to its merciful manifestation within time and space. It is a reality chosen, drawn near, and given life by the Lord, followed by those who emerge from its light: the saints, the Prophets, the Messengers, and the believers, peace be upon them.

Thus, it has been narrated in the hadith, reported by Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Qatāda, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “Whoever sees me has seen the Real” (Bukhārī, no. 6502; Muslim, no. 2359). Whoever sees him has seen the Real, the Almighty, with all His Names and Attributes, and knows that he is the unique and greatest guide to His Essence.

This chosen status (*iṣṭifāʾ*) was passed down to the Prophet’s progeny, peace be upon them. It was narrated from our master Zayd ibn Thābit, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “I am leaving among you that which, if you hold firmly to it, you will never go astray: the Book of Allah and the elite of my progeny, the people of my household” (Tirmidhī, no. 2682).

Therefore, whoever clings to them clings to the Everlasting. Through this attachment, they come to recognize the Everlasting itself. The chosen ones neither perish as the hardened hearts assume, nor do they die. Whoever holds fast to them will be liberated from death.

If the martyrs (*shuhadāʾ*) are alive and sustained, then what can be said of the elite among the chosen ones from the Prophet’s group and his pure family? The truly perishing ones (hālikīn) are those who doubted the life of this exalted group.

These Chosen Ones existed even before creation, as they

literally are the primordial light — the very same light as that of their grandfather, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him — preceding all creation, from which all things were brought into existence. Numerous hadiths support this truth.

Allah the Almighty has entrusted *al-Muṣṭafā* and his progeny, peace and blessings be upon them, with dominion over all. Thus, when it is stated in the verse, “His is the Judgment,” it signifies that this judgment is delegated (*wakāla*) to His Face. Therefore, whoever represents the Face of Allah in any era is granted the authority over the division (*qisma*) in the universes. It has been narrated in the ḥadīth: “Allah is the Giver, and I am the Distributor (*al-qāsim*)” (Bukhārī, no. 3116). Hence, judgment belongs exclusively to the People of the Tree (*ahl al-shajara*). Those who follow them are destined for happiness, while those who oppose them are destined for misery.

Our master, the Shaykh, may Allah sanctify his secret, says in one of his poems: “I distributed happiness and

misery…"

The minds of the common people become bewildered by this saying, and their chests tighten, yet the matter is not difficult to grasp. The truly miserable one is the one who opposes sainthood (*wilāya*) in its various forms. Allah declares war on such a person, as narrated in the divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*): "Whoever shows enmity to a friend (*walī*) of Mine, I declare war upon them" (Bukhārī, no. 6502). This, indeed, is the essence of misery.

And the truly happy one is the person who clings to sainthood. Such a person will never go astray, and whoever never goes astray remains in eternal guidance, having been purified and restored to their original reality — a light emanating from the light of *al-Muṣṭafā* and his progeny, peace and blessings be upon them. They will have thus become a façade, a face (*wajh*) of the Face of Allah, the Almighty.

Returning to purity (*ṭahāra*) that is the saint from the Prophet's progeny, peace and blessings be upon him, is what is alluded to in the noble verse: "and to Him you will be returned…" No one returns to the Face of Allah except those who clung to the Prophet and his elite progeny, supporting and comforting them, for they are, as mentioned earlier, the Face of Allah, the Almighty.

But how does this return to the Origin occur? The first return of those devoted to the Prophet's progeny, peace and blessings be upon him, is by returning their own images (*ṣuwar*) in the physical world to that of the saint. In truth, in the reading of the divine name "Allah," this archetypal image is the only door to reading the letter *hāʾ*.

Furthermore, the verse we are interpreting reveals that Allah has specified this return for a distinct group of believers who cling to the Prophet's progeny, peace and blessings be upon them, above other Muslims. This group has been honored by Allah with a living and luminous reading of the Qur'an, ascending through its levels — not a dry and rigid one. The address was directed specifically to those engaged in the process of reading the verse, as He said: "and to Him you will be returned," not "and to Him they will be returned." This means that you, O you who are actively flowing through the subtle realities of this verse, O you who are present in the now and not absent from this process — you are the ones destined to return to the Face of Allah.

The Sufi is one who continuously engages with the reading of His Book, living without past or future. Such a person is the child of the moment, anchored in the present, bearing the station of faith. For them, life begins in the very instant they behold the divine light. The believer is truly the one whose reading of the Qur'an's verses serves as a healing (*shifāʾ*), a blessing meant solely for them.

This reading is a journey across the path drawn from His Face at its various levels, with self-realization (*taḥaqquq*) as the ultimate goal. This is the group that constantly returns toward the eternal, unsatisfied with merely reading the outward text. Instead, they engage with the Book on all levels, ascending from the written to the concealed (*maknūn*). In doing so, they return to the Owner of the Book, or His complete manifestation — *al-Muṣṭafā*, peace and blessings be upon him, who was described by our mother ʿĀʾisha, may Allah be pleased with her, as a walking Qur'an (Tirmidhī, no. 3640). He, peace be upon him, is the master of it, endowed with the privilege of distributing its share to whom he chooses in the eternity of his light, a role he entrusted to his progeny in the times that followed.

Thus, this reader escapes from the darkness of perishable things (*halak*) toward the entity that does not perish: **"His Face"** — *al-Muṣṭafā*, peace and blessings be upon him, and his progeny, the bearers of his secret.

If touching and kissing the Black Stone is as if you were touching and kissing the Hand of Allah, then how much greater is the gaze upon the progeny of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him? The Face of Allah is revealed through them, so gaze upon the saint from the Prophet's

progeny with an awakened eye, and you will witness the Truth manifest…

Unfortunately, you often see the people of the veil (*ahl al-ḥijāb*) rushing to condemn what comes from the people of Allah, particularly when the latter say, “Looking at the face of the saint (*walī*) is better than seventy years of worship…” They forget what our master, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said about the “dot” of the Qur’an. It is narrated on the authority of ʿAbd Allah ibn Masʿūd, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “Looking at the face of ʿAlī is an act of worship” (Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-khulafāʾ).

Therefore, when you gaze upon the face of the saint, understand that you are beholding the Face of Allah. Remain steadfast in the station of servitude (ʿubūdiyya) until the divine secret within this is revealed to you, and do not contest this truth until you return to Him...

O Allah, send Your prayers, blessings, and grant peace to the Light of Lights, the Secret of Secrets, the kāf of Veils, the Eraser of misery, the Illuminator of hearts, and the Spirit of Decrees, our master Muḥammad, the pure and trustworthy Prophet, and upon his pure family and righteous companions, with a prayer that is everlasting, limitless, and unending, and a peace that is abundant and never-ceasing.

THE MEANING OF DIVINE HOUSES

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

Allah says in His Holy Book: **"In houses which Allah has allowed to be exalted and that His name be remembered therein, glorifying Him therein in the mornings and the evenings" (Q 24:36).**

The outward meaning of these "houses of Allah" refers to mosques and designated places for remembrance (dhikr) and Qur'an recitation. Prayer in these spaces carries varying levels of reward. Among all mosques, three are uniquely honored with significantly multiplied rewards: the Sacred Mosque (al-masjid al-ḥarām) in Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque (al-masjid al-nabawī) in Medina, and al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "A prayer in my mosque is better than a thousand prayers in any other mosque except the Sacred Mosque." He also said: "A prayer in the Sacred Mosque is better than one hundred thousand prayers elsewhere."

In addition to these three, Masjid Qubāʾ, located in the outskirts of Medina, holds a distinct virtue. The Prophet said: "Whoever performs ablution at home and then goes to Masjid Qubāʾ to pray, he will receive the reward of an ʿumra (minor pilgrimage)."

Moreover, prayer in congregation is far superior to solitary prayer, as it is multiplied twenty-seven times. As narrated by Abū Hurayra, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "A person's prayer in congregation is better than their prayer at home or in the marketplace by twenty-some degrees. This is because when one performs ablution well, goes to the mosque with no purpose except prayer, and walks step by step, each step raises their rank or removes a sin."

Thus, outwardly, the prayer may appear the same, yet its rewards differ according to the sanctity of the space. These are the "manifest houses" (buyūt ẓāhira). But where are the "inner houses" (buyūt bāṭina)?

In a divine saying (ḥadīth qudsi), Allah says: "Neither My heavens nor My earth can contain Me, but the heart of My believing servant can."

This highlights that the heart of a true believer, illuminated with faith, is more vast than all physical spaces and creation itself. Faith (īmān) is a light cast by Allah into the heart, as the Prophet said: "When light enters the heart, it expands and opens."

The heart, then, as the space and locus of divine disclosure, must be expansive enough to receive the blessings of the Prophet. So, Which house should you prioritize and journey toward in your current quest?

If your journey is toward outward houses, it is to perform rituals such as ḥajj, ʿumra, or supererogatory acts of worship, regardless of your spiritual state. These spaces are open to every Muslim, irrespective of their level of closeness to God. However, if you choose to journey toward your inner house, you must first ensure that your heart is in a sound condition (qalb salīm). Do not imagine that the heart is merely the physical organ; this fleshly piece cannot bear the divine command (amr). Instead, the "heart" (qalb) refers to the niche where your inner self, your core, your essence, and your secrets are revealed, all of which must be purified and aligned with divine will.

Elevation is for the heart while the outward actions are merely a reflection of what lies within. If your words and deeds align with the guidance of the heart, they will be accepted and a source of light. However, if your actions contradict your intentions, it signifies that your heart is not in a state of soundness. A sound heart would naturally manifest its inner truth.

The verse mentions **"houses which Allah has permitted (adhina) to be exalted."** This idhn (permission) signifies the necessity of divine sanction, granted through an intermediary, in a state of attentive listening and readiness to act. In the spiritual path (sulūk), the seeker follows the one who grants this permission, avoiding distractions or false claimants. This practice aligns fully with Islamic law, as guides serve as essential pillars for true knowledge in Islam. The guide (shaykh) provides instruction according to the seeker's spiritual capacity, gradually leading them toward a state of elevation.

When permission is granted, the heart ascends from the earthly realm (*mulk*) to the spiritual realm (*malakūt*), witnessing stars, moons, and suns of divine knowledge. This upward journey culminates in sincere repentance (*tawba*) that propels the seeker into celestial ascension. According to the depth of one's repentance, one's speed in traversing the spiritual realms increases. The heart becomes radiant, revealing truths and secrets that illuminate the seeker's path.

If you seek the physical path (*al-nahj al-mulkī*), direct yourself toward the material realm, focusing on the calculation of rewards. But if you aspire to higher and loftier degrees, turn inward toward your own state and self. This is why, in the spiritual journey, we say: "Work on yourself and leave others aside, for preoccupation with others only leads to distance and heedlessness."

May Allah guide you. If you wish to move from the confines of physical forms to the journey of the spirits, hold firmly to the clear and explicit verse: **"Allah is the *Walī* of those who believe"** (Q 2:257). The *walī* (saint) is the one sent to lead believers out of darkness into light. Certainty (*yaqīn*) is essential for this illumination to penetrate your heart.

Do not mistakenly associate divine light (*nūr*) with outward beauty or physical appearance, for even disbelievers may be described as having external radiance. True light resides in the humble and disheveled — those whom society may dismiss, labeling them with the harshest words.

How can you deny this light? Reflect on the story of Moses, peace be upon him, who sought to see the face of the Creator (Q 7:143). Why would he ask for such a vision if divine light could not be perceived? Contemplate the verse: **"You will not see Me,"** and its continuation: "But when His Lord revealed Himself to the mountain" (Qur'an 7:143). Do not limit your intellect; instead, read and ascend.

Reading, in this sense, does not mean merely memorizing or showcasing speculative knowledge, but engaging in reflective study that elevates the soul. As the Qur'an says: **"The Most Merciful taught the Qur'an"** (Q 55:1–2). With every reading, ask for more: **"Say, my Lord, increase me in knowledge"** (Q 20:114). This knowledge comes only from Allah: **"Read in the name of your Lord"** (Q 96:1). When you read in the name of the Lord (*al-Rabb*), you will understand the meaning of servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*), realizing your connection to the Creator.

This is why *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* ("The Opening" chapter of the Qur'an) is described as a division between you and your Lord. When you recite it, Allah responds, raising your rank and fulfilling your needs. In turn, you become one of those who are not distracted by trade or worldly pursuits from the remembrance of Allah. True remembrance (*dhikr*), paired with reflection (*fikr*) and witnessing, keeps you vigilant even in the midst of work and daily life. This way you can guard your heart from straying and constantly strive for its soundness.

Permission (*idhn*) in *dhikr* is essential for true elevation. If remembrance without permission could bring such elevation, then everyone who remembers Allah would reach divine knowledge. However, this requires a mediator (*wasīṭa*) whose role is to purify your heart. The heart, like metal, rusts and must be polished through remembrance connected to a living source (the shaykh). Only this way can you uncover your original nature and contemplate your core essence.

The heart is your true self, imbued with the divine breath: **"I breathed into him of My spirit"** (Q 38:72). Yet its descent into earthly clay causes it to rust. Do not place full trust in your heart until it is granted permission for elevation, at which point it transforms into a secret and a spirit. The essence of this spirit is to remain undistracted by worldly pursuits and everlastingly witness the divine light.

In this station, you become a free being wandering in the beauty of the divine dominion (*malakūt*). However, you always need to guard yourself from descending again into the lowest of the low (*asfal al-sāfilīn*).

Seek your essence. Close your eyes, and your heart will reveal itself. If darkness appears, search for Allah's light until your vision becomes sharp and unveiled. When the veil is lifted, you will see subtle meanings hidden behind forms.

If you seek an elevated path to purify your heart, remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying down with consistent devotion. Reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, as the Qur'an says: **"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly" (Q 3:191).** Such reflections are the gateway to the knowledge of the Qur'an's secrets in both the cosmos and your soul.

Journey toward yourself. Seek the breath of the divine within you and ascend with it. Beware of denial, for it leads to falling into the cry (*al-ṣayḥa*) of destruction, descending into the lowest depths. At that point, nothing will fill your emptiness except dust. Instead, seek elevation, purify your heart, and let divine light guide you beyond the veils of form to the boundless beauty of the divine reality.

THE ALCHEMY OF INTENTION

BY SIHEM CHAABENI

The foundation of any action, and indeed of the spiritual path itself, is intention (*niyya*). It is the subtle yet powerful force that distinguishes a mere habit from a true act of worship. Consider the simple act of washing: performed

for cleanliness, it remains in the profane sphere; performed for ritual purity, it is elevated to a sacred act. Intention also delineates the various degrees of devotion, separating the obligatory from the supererogatory and the virtuous. An action's very acceptance or rejection by Allah hinges upon the intention that underpins it.

This principle governs external deeds, but in the realm of the inner life — the spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) to which the aspirant (*murīd*) yearns to ascend — the matter is infinitely more delicate. Its intricacies often elude even the most sincere wayfarers, save for those who have entrusted themselves to a guiding friend of Allah (*walī murshid*), an expert in the ailments of the heart. This is the nurturing guide (*shaykh murabbī*), who accompanies the disciple on their journey, illuminating the defects and afflictions of their lower self (*nafs*).

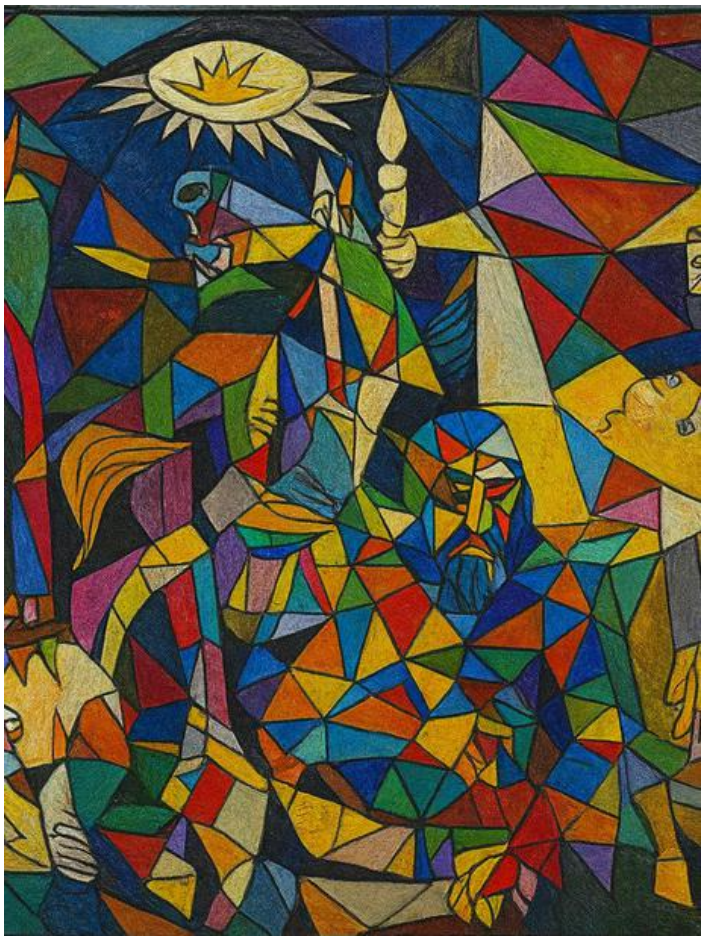
As the sages of this path have affirmed, the last vestige to be purged from the heart of the disciple is the love of leadership and prominence (*ḥubb al-riyāsa*). Therefore, upon taking the covenant (*bayʿa*) and embarking on the journey towards Allah, the disciple must evacuate their heart of all that is other-than-Allah (*siwā*). Their sole aim must be the countenance of Allah, the Majestic and Glorious. This singular intention must be their constant companion throughout the path. It must not be altered or diluted by ulterior motives or worldly aspirations. To this end, a state of vigilant awareness is paramount, for heedlessness creates an opening for the whispers of Satan and the capricious impulses of the self.

The great Sufi master and founder of the Shādhilī Order, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, may Allah be pleased with him, elaborates on this profound reality: "The essence of intention is the absence of anything other than the intended object (*ʿadam ghar al-manwī*) upon entering into the act, and its perfection is its sustained presence until the act's completion."[1]

He further commented on the Prophet Muhammad's saying, "Actions are but by intentions," (Bukhārī; Muslim) by stating: "Intention has a locus, a timing, and a modality. We ask You, O Allah, for purity in its locus, success in its timing, and preservation (*ʿiṣmatan*) in its modality, and a deep realization of its meanings. We ask you for a sound setting of the heart (*ʿaqd*), a virtuous aim, and the seeking of Allah's countenance in glorification of the rights of Lordship and in compelling the self to the attribute of servitude. The locus of the intention is the heart, its time is at the commencement of actions, and its modality is the connection of the heart with the limbs. The meaning of intention comprises four aspects: aim (*qaṣd*), resolve (*ʿazm*), will (*irāda*), and volition (*mashīʾa*), all of which point to a single reality. Intention has two forms: the directing of the action with excellent mindfulness, and the second form: sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) in the action for Allah's sake, seeking the reward that is with Him, and desiring the countenance of Allah Most High."[2]

Therefore, if the disciple resolves to journey towards the station of spiritual excellence (*iḥsān*), the direct experiential knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of Allah, and proximity to Him, they must dedicate themselves with utter sincerity to Allah. This requires the divestment of the self's desires (hawā) in order to realize the love of Allah. The disciple should know that they are Divinely sought, for Allah's love for them preceded their love for Him, as He says in the Qur'an: **"He loves them, and they love Him" (Q 5:54)**. In this regard, al-Shādhilī said, "I asked my master [ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh al-ʿAlamī (d. 1227)], may Allah be pleased with him, about the litany (wird) of the realized verifiers (*muḥaqqiqīn*), and he replied: 'Commit yourself to the effacement of desire and the love of the Master. Love refuses to employ a lover for anything other than its Beloved.'"[3]

This station of Divine love is beautifully depicted in a sacred tradition (*ḥadīth qudsī*) where Allah states: "Whoever shows enmity to a deputy of Mine (*walī*), I shall declare war upon him. My servant does not draw



near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to seek refuge in Me, I would surely grant him refuge" (Bukhārī).

This describes the rank of the *walī*, the one whom Allah loves, who has reached the state of subsistence (*baqāʾ*) after annihilation (*fanāʾ*). They have been annihilated from their blameworthy attributes and have become characterized by praiseworthy qualities, subsisting by Allah and for Allah.

Each *walī* has a specific degree of sainthood, and their influence on the disciple corresponds to the station in which Allah has placed them. For Allah bestows spiritual support (*madad*) upon the *walī*, and through him, this support, in the form of light (*nūr*), knowledge (*ʿulūm*), gnostic insights (*maʿārif*), and secrets (*asrār*), is extended to his followers.

Al-Shādhilī explains: "As for the deputies of Allah (*awliyāʾ*), they are of varying degrees, granted expansion in knowledge, gnosis, light, love, oneness (*tawḥīd*), certainty (*yaqīn*), the unveiling of the unseen, and firmness therein. They are realized in annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and in the preference for subsistence (*baqāʾ*), and their carpet is derivative love. As for the veracious ones (*ṣiddīqūn*), they have five states at their beginning and five at their end. The first five are: the folding of existence from their innermost secrets, the unveiling of the affair of the two abodes to their spirits, the watchfulness over the hearts, the observance of intellects, and the preservation of souls (*nufūs*). The five at their end are: the realization of love [and] the innermost core (*lubb*), the aspiration for their [inward] secrets, firmness in intimate friendship (*khulla*), and the characterization by subsistence (*baqāʾ*). Their carpet is foundational love. The benefit of this detailed exposition is that the one who is emulated may give to each of his followers according to their state and station in that which Allah has placed them."[4]

The realization of love comes through the lifting of the veil (*ḥijāb*), which is also known as unveiling (*kashf*) or opening (*fatḥ*). As is well established, Sufism is a science of experiential tasting (*dhawq*), and this tasting occurs in the heart. This becomes possible only after the heart has been purified through spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*) and the purification (*tazkiya*) of the self, until it becomes a sound heart (*qalb salīm*), empty of all that is other-than-God. In this context, al-Shādhilī says: "The sign of communion (*wuṣla*) is the outpouring of mercy with the visual witnessings (*shawāhid*) of love. And the witnessings of love are the lifting of the veil and finding delight in the Divine address."

He also said: "Delight is the heart's encounter with the object of delight, a meaning subsisting in the heart, pictured therein."[5]

If the heart remains attached to material forms and images, it is veiled from the witnessing of the Divine light. The veil of darkness must be removed for the light to enter. This is achieved through the purification of the will and the sincerity of the intention. Al-Shādhilī, may Allah be pleased with him, states: "Sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) is a light from Allah Most High which He entrusts in the heart of His believing servant, by which He severs him from all else. This is the origin of sincerity, which no angel can perceive to record, no devil can perceive to corrupt, and no personal inclination can sway. From it branch three intentions: the intention of sincerity in the action out of magnification of Allah's command, the intention of sincerity in seeking reward and recompense, and the intention of sincerity in purifying the action from blemishes, observing nothing else in it. We are commanded to be servants through all of these intentions. Whoever holds fast to one of them is sincere (*mukhliṣ*), and **'they are in varying degrees in the sight of Allah, and Allah is Seeing of what they do'" (Q 3:163).**[6]

There are some wayfarers who actively seek miracles (*karāmāt, sing. karāma*). However, among the verifiers of this path, the greatest karāma is steadfastness (*istiqāma*) on the straight path, which is the fruit of sincerity. As for the extraordinary feats that manifest at the hands of the saints, we affirm them just as we believe in the miracles of the prophets. Yet, the disciple should not linger on them if they appear during their journey. They are glad tidings, but they must not be allowed to become a stumbling block on the path, for that would introduce self-admiration (*ʿujb*) and delusion (*ghurūr*) into the soul. In this, al-Shādhilī remarks: "In sum, it is not given to one who seeks it, nor to one who entertains the thought of it and exerts himself in its pursuit. Rather, it is given to a servant who sees neither himself nor his actions, who is preoccupied with what Allah loves, who looks to Allah's grace, and who has despaired of his own self and his deeds."

In this spirit, al-Shādhilī, may Allah be pleased with him, concludes: "Verily, there are two all-encompassing, comprehensive miracles in this world: the *karāma* of faith (*īmān*) with increasing certainty (*īqān*) and direct vision (*shuhūd al-ʿiyān*), and the karāma of action through emulation, following [the Prophet], and shunning false claims and deception. Whoever is granted these two yet yearns for others is a fabricating liar or one who has erred in knowledge and right action. He is like one who is honored with witnessing the king and serving him with full contentment, yet he yearns for the task of governing beasts or for the garments of the sick (*khulaʿ al-marḍā*). Every karāma that is not accompanied by contentment from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and love for Allah and from Allah, its possessor is one who is being gradually led to destruction (*mustadraj*), deluded, or a deficient [seeker], or a ruined loser."[7]

References

[1] Al-Shādhilī, Abū al-Ḥasan. Makhṭūṭ al-Qaṣd ilā Allāh, edited by Siham al-Shaʿbānī, p. 78.

[2] Ibid., p. 81.

[3] Ibid., p. 83.

[4] Ibid., p. 86.

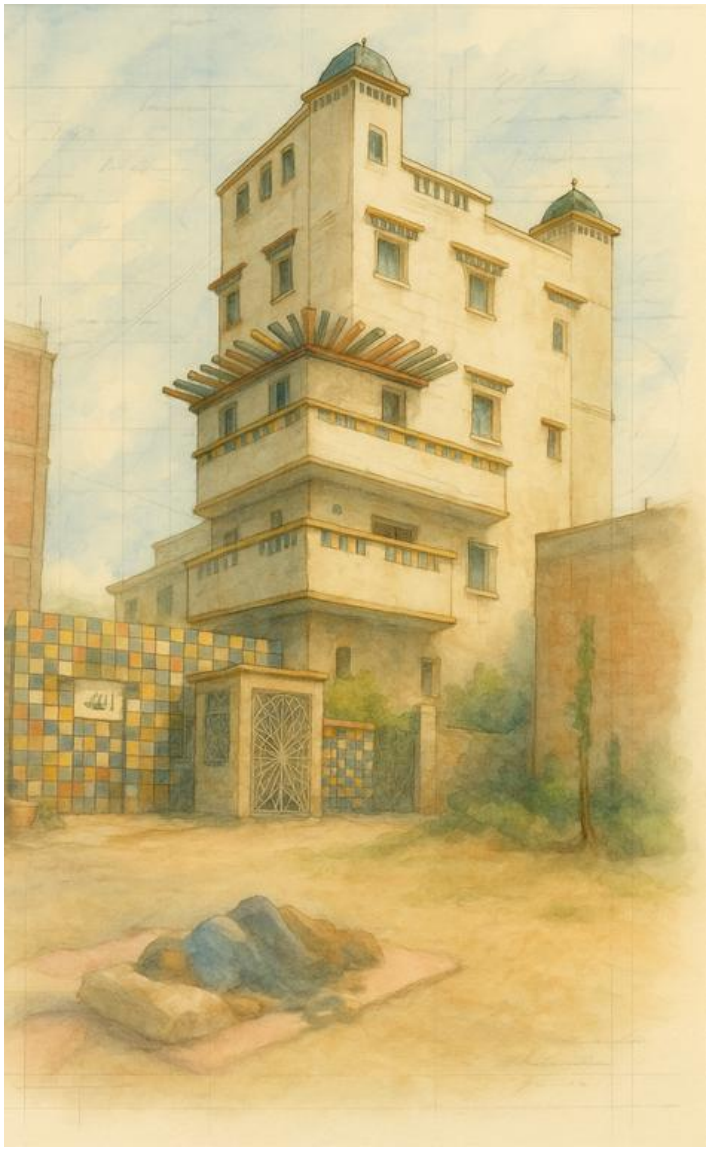
[5] Ibid., p. 92.

[6] Ibid., p. 97.

[7] Ibid., p. 98.

RAMADAN IN THE HOUSE OF LIGHT, PART 1

BY ESSIA ELOUED



On Thursday, April 15, 2021, Morocco suspended all flights to and from 39 countries, including Tunisia, due to the second wave of COVID-19. The government announcement was made public the following morning, April 16, 2021. A couple, scheduled to return to Tunis on Sunday, April 18, found themselves stranded at the Karkariyya zāwiya (lodge) in Al Aaroui. Sidi Shaykh Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, may Allah sanctify his secret, had already invited Sidi Anouar and his wife to spend Ramadan, Eid, and one or two weeks of the month of Shawwāl at the zāwiya. Sidi Anouar had accepted this invitation before the closure of Morocco's airspace. It was the first time that Lalla Essia and her husband spent the holy month away from home. Once the initial surprise subsided, she began organizing her days around the rhythms of daily life at the zāwiya.

Two French disciples with military backgrounds, a Moroccan disciple who was a doctor, and a Tunisian engaged in renunciation also spent Ramadan at the *zāwiya*. Occasionally, a few female disciples (*faqīrāt*) from Al Aaroui would visit to spend a few days, particularly on Fridays, to attend the weekly gathering (*majmaʿ*). Lalla Najette, the wife of Sidi Shaykh, arranged for a young woman from the neighborhood to prepare meals, while the present disciples took care of the remaining household chores. The guest, however, was firmly instructed by Lalla Najette to refrain from participating in housework due to her advanced age.

The disciples' days at the *zāwiya* typically began around 10:30 a.m., though the lady of the house would rise much earlier to prepare the children for school, feed them breakfast, dress them, and send them off with Sidi *Saʿīd*. After the midday *ẓuhr* prayer with Sidi Shaykh, house cleaning and dinner preparation began on the fourth floor. The guest, excused from these tasks, would tidy her own room, wash her clothes, recite the Qur'an, or care for Sidi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, who was just two years old and had grown attached to her. He followed her everywhere — or rather, was often carried in her arms. After the afternoon ʿaṣr prayer, Sidi Shaykh held his daily sessions with the disciples, answering questions, delivering lessons, or leading collective invocations with the disciples until maghrib.

After the *maghrib* prayer, the female disciples, Lalla Najette, and the children would gather around a low table in a small room adjacent to the kitchen to share their meal. Following dinner, two female disciples would clean up and tidy the kitchen and dining area, while the others

prepared for the evening *ʿishā'* and *tarāwīḥ* prayers. Miraculously, Sidi Shaykh ordered a bamboo partition to be erected at the back of the prayer space (*masjid*) on the first floor, allowing the female disciples to pray alongside the men. This unexpected gesture deeply moved the female disciples. It is worth noting that at that time, mosques around the world were closed for the first time in human history due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even the Sacred Precinct (*ḥaram*) in Mecca was shut and empty. This extraordinary privilege, a divine gift to those present in the house of light, the Karkariya *zāwiya*, was an unforgettable blessing etched into the visitor's heart and memory.

After the *tarāwīḥ* prayers, the female disciples would gather on the fourth floor around a table laden with tea, coffee, pastries, and other delicious treats, chatting and playing with the children. Lalla Essia, the guest, who was of a certain age, often wished to sleep earlier than the others to prepare herself for the morning litany (*dhikr*). However, Lalla Najette would insist that she stay up with everyone. If she went to check on the female disciples and found Lalla Essia absent, she would climb to her fifth-floor room to make sure everything was fine. The guest, unaccustomed to being away from home for more than a week and concerned about her elderly, ill mother and demanding professional responsibilities, occasionally felt uneasy and weighed down by worry. Lalla Najette, with her kindness, intelligence, and great heart, was sensitive to these feelings. She would speak to her gently, ask if she wanted a specific dish prepared the following day, reassure her about her mother's health, and remind her to cherish this unique experience.

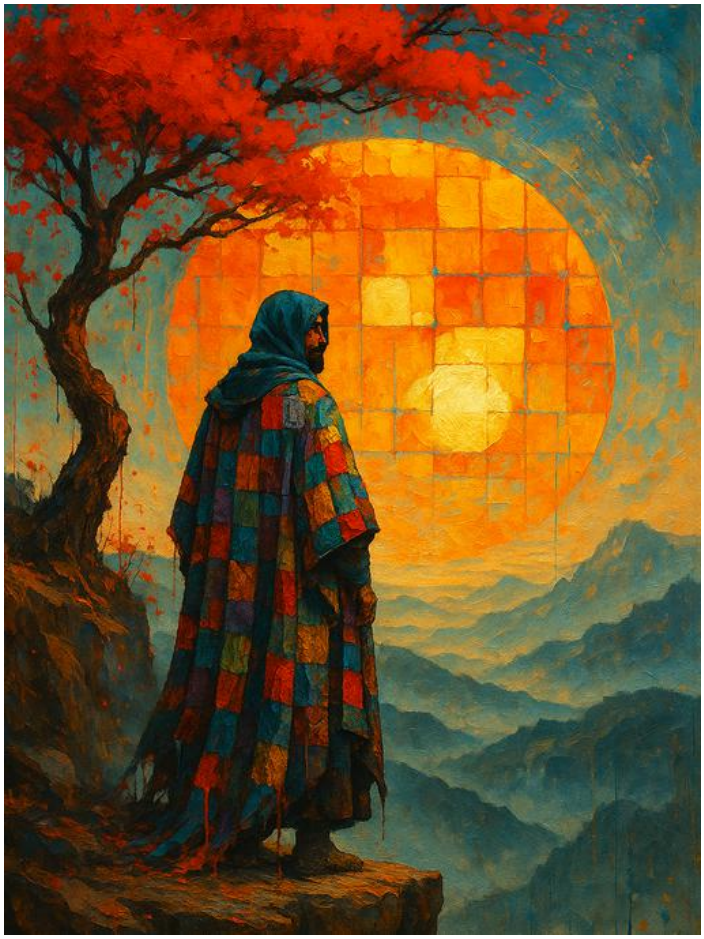
"One day," she said, "when months and years have passed, you will look back on this Ramadan spent in the house of the Lord, and you may wish to return, but it might not be possible. Embrace this divine gift, set aside your worries, for here, you are among family. Everyone loves you, and Sidi Shaykh is very pleased that you are with us."

Every other evening, at the insistence of both Lalla Najette and Sidi Shaykh, the guest would join her husband and their two sons, Sidi Mohamed and Sidi Marouen, in the large room on the third floor to spend quality time together. These family reunions were pure joy. Lalla Hafsia would bring tea, pastries, and sometimes a portion of the female disciples' dinner that Lalla Najette had set aside for the guest's children. Sidi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Lalla Walā', and Lalla Hirā often joined in, brightening these intimate gatherings.

Sidi Shaykh, may Allah sanctify his secret, granted another favor to the guest by allowing her to attend the daily sessions at the back of the masjid alongside only Lalla Hafsia. She was overjoyed and began attending all the sessions, whether private or public. There, she learned what no book could teach and discovered the true wisdom and divine knowledge of Sidi Shaykh.

Weeks passed, filled with piety, daily invocations, love among the disciples and the blessed family of light, and communal prayers, including *tarāwīḥ* and *tahajjud* (night prayer), lasting until dawn. The nights were cold, and Lalla Najette gifted the guests warm clothing, while Sidi Shaykh did the same for her husband, Sidi Anouar. Always attentive, Lalla Najette showed her constant affection, and Lalla Essia was amazed by such kindness and grew increasingly attached to every member of this blessed family.

As Eid approached, Sidi Shaykh gifted all the disciples at the *zāwiya* Eid clothing: white *jallābas* embroidered with green and white scarves. The disciples, like young girls, were delighted and eagerly awaited the day of Eid to wear their new outfits. Even the guest, despite being in her sixties, was overjoyed by Sidi Shaykh's kindness and love. But little did she know, an even greater surprise awaited her in the final week of Ramadan, just days before Eid…



MY STATE— WHAT A STATE IT IS!

BY MEHDI BADECHE

My state—what a state it is.
A state no words can describe,
No prolonged sighs can capture,
No leaning yearning can reach.
I thought I was who I have always been—
But I am no longer me.
I looked into the mirror,
And asked: Who am I?
I spoke a few words,
But were they truly mine?
I read what I wrote,
Yet it felt I had never written them.
I realized—
I am no longer me.
So who am I (*anā*)?
Somewhere between the alif and the other alif lies a nūn—
But where am I within them?
Don't argue with the laws,
For I will never find to myself an "I" (*anā*).
This is not some cosmic philosophy,
This is the truth: I am not I.
Every thought I once thought,
Every knowledge I once claimed,
Every knot I once tied—
All of it, a spider's web.
Everything around me,
Even the worlds within my cosmos,
Even my very breath and my heartbeats—
All, a spider's web.
So who am I?
Call me mad, call me lost,
Say whatever you want,
Judge me with the laws of reason.
But if you only tasted a drop of my state,
You would excuse me long before my words.
Like a dream—or maybe a nightmare,
Like a book without rules,

Like a wedding where the groom never came,
Songs and drums, without sound or color.
Like paradise—like the fire,
I turn between them, night and day.
I am not me, nor him, nor you—
So who am I?
My doctor told me, my beloved told me:
This is your moment in the Aeon (*dahr*).
You never were, and you will never be.
But if you forget, you will remember who I am.
Hurry, O Distributor, hurry—
For the one who spoke has no patience left,
And the companion yearn for the green pupils.
And this poor soul—fate's worlds have crushed him.
I am not fit for the stations of the Knower's path,
Yet You, my Lord, are worthy of all grace and generosity.
You know my state, You know my question,
And You are the wisest of judges.
So unveil Yourself to us by Your Name *al-Wadud* (The Affectionate),
And admit us into the sainthood of the covenant, without chains.
Dissolve us into the tranquility of the secrets,
Satisfy us and be satisfied with us—
In the timeless infinity of the Absolute.
And send Your blessings and peace upon the one
Through whom mercy never ceases,
And by whom the darkness of otherness is lifted.

Paris, on 30.04.2022

AN INVITATION TO THE DIVINE LIGHT, PART 3

The Reality and Manifestation of Divine Light

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

In the narration of ʿAbd Allah ibn Masʿūd, when the Prophet ﷺ was asked, "What is *īmān*?" he replied: "It is a light that Allah casts into the heart of a believing servant. It increases and decreases." Meaning, this light has fluctuations — it increases and it decreases. It grows, and it diminishes.

The prevailing problem in the Muslim community, regardless of one's level of belief, is that when they hear the word light (*nūr*), they perceive it as something metaphorical or symbolic, not as something real that flows through them like the soul flows through the body. This is the problem. As long as you believe that light is merely symbolic, you will never witness it.

I am telling you that you will neither taste (*dhawq*) nor reach the level of worshipping Allah "as if you see Him." Who has blocked your path? It is you who have blocked it for yourself. You have denied the light of faith (*nūr al-īmān*). You reduced īmān to pillars, just as you did with islām, and denied that īmān, with its six pillars, could flow within you and create subtle, luminous realities in your heart.

Where did I get this, you ask? From the Qur'an and Sunna.

My Lord says: "Indeed, Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who have believe (*yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū*)…" He did not say, "O you who have submitted (*aslamū*)." This means the command here is directed specifically at the people of īmān, indicating that those at the rank of *islām* are outside this circle, outside this verse. This verse does not apply to them.

What am I saying? Criticism often exceeds understanding, but notice that I am not saying anything here. I am simply repeating what Allah has said. You can criticize the servant,

but you cannot criticize the words of the Lord. Despite yourself, it is: "O you who believe, send blessings upon him and greet him with peace."

So, who are those who send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ? Are they the people at the level of islām — which includes knowledge of Islam, the eye of Islam, the reality of Islam — or are they the people of īmān? The verse is absolutely clear: it is the people of īmān.

When the Prophet ﷺ said, "Faith is a light that Allah casts into the heart of His believing servant," this means that this light is a divine casting (qadhfa ilāhiyya) into your servitude (ʿubūdiyyatuka). It is not achieved through your effort, knowledge, studies, academic pursuits, or anything else. No, it is a divine casting. If you do not return to Allah, it will not be cast upon you.

Its application remains specific to those for whom "goodness has been decreed by Us beforehand" (Q 21:101). It is not tied to anything that comes before *īmān*, nor to *islām*, nor even to those who prostrate. No, it pertains to a station of the heart — if you truly have a heart. That is, if you are among the people who directly taste spiritual truths (*dhawq*).

So what does the Almighty (Praised and Exalted) say? **"It is He who sends blessings upon you, as do His angels, to bring you out from darkness into the light" (Q 33:43)**. Isn't this from Allah, not from your deeds? My Lord is the one who blesses you, along with His angels, to bring you out from darkness into the light. If you have not come into the light, then neither Allah nor the angels have blessed you.

If this describes your situation, that means you have a severance in preeternity before the here-and-now. If you were truly among the people of light, you would realize that indeed, Allah sent blessings upon you. This is the Qur'an. Allah the Almighty said it. It's not a weak hadith that can be subjected to the skeptical attitude that pervades our day and age. This is why I present to you Allah's speech. It is up to you whether you want to wake up.

This light is the cause, the path, and the gateway to worshiping the Lord in the full sense of "as if you see Him," meaning to worship through vision. Allah (Praised and Exalted) says: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth" (24:35). What do you understand from this? That the heavens and the earth, their origin is from the Light of Allah. Notice, it is not from the light of the Most Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*), the Most Compassionate (*al-Raḥīm*), but from the Light of the Name that points to the Essence — "*Allah* is the Light of the heavens and the earth."

The verse continues to mention that "the exemplification of His Light is like a niche, within it a lamp, the lamp is within a glass, the glass is like a resplendent planet…" Why did Allah exemplify His Light? We obsess over the melodious recitation of the Qur'an rather than seek to understand this exemplification.

When you sit with someone and they speak to you using ambiguous words, you inquire further. They then give you an example to help you understand the true meaning. For instance, if you sat with a teacher and they told you that the equation 1 + 1 equals 2, 1 divided by 1 equals 1, 1 minus 1 equals 0, and 1 times 1 equals 1, you wouldn't have understood much. But you understand better when they give you a more relatable example, like if you add an apple to another apple, you get two apples.

Thus, the reason Allah gave the exemplification is so that you may understand the fundamental principle that Allah informed you of — that "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth."

This verse is significant. First of all, it is from a chapter called "The Light" (*al-Nūr*). If you deny the light, you are denying a surah in the Qur'an. Why? Because you are blind.

And what does the Lord of Might say in this chapter? **"A chapter We have revealed and made obligatory" (Q 24:1)**. This is an obligatory chapter, despite your desires or inclinations. So the chapter of "The Light" is an obligation imposed by Allah that you have no choice but to accept.

So “The exemplification of His Light,” means it is an exemplification of this obligation: “The exemplification of His Light is like a niche, within it a lamp, the lamp is within a glass, the glass is like a resplendent planet.”

Everyone understands that a niche is a recess within a wall that is open on one side and closed on the other. This superficial understanding is sound.We place a lamp in the niche so that it shines, beautifies, and illuminates the entire room. This was the method of lighting in the past. Hence, the lamp in this verse refers to the light that emanates. It is protected in a glass, and the shape of the glass is like a resplendent planet.

Up until now, the example is clear. This example is given to you by Allah, meaning that He made it accessible to you — unless you reject it. Why would you reject it? If your belief about the Light is limited to the six pillars of īmān, then you have no place for the concept of light in the hadiths of the Prophet ﷺ where it is described as a light that Allah casts into the heart of the believer. Consider moreover another hadith of the Prophet ﷺ: “Allah created created beings in darkness. Then He cast His light upon them. Whoever received it was guided, and whoever it missed was led astray.” As the Prophet ﷺ says: “The pen has dried on what has been and what will be.” This is clear. Rather than the endless back-and-forth, either accept this meaning as it is or do not.

In yet another hadith, which relates to the issue of worshipping Allah as if you see Him, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked: “Did you see your Lord?” He did not respond by saying “I seek refuge in Allah,” as we might say, or “Astaghfirullah! What is this polytheism?” Notice, also, that they did not ask, “Did you see Allah?” but rather, “Did you see your Lord?” Lordship is a concept that can be co-present with servitude. As long as there is a servant, there must be a Lord. So, what was the Prophet’s ﷺ answer? “Light that I see.” He did not say “I saw Him as light” such that the Prophet’s ﷺ vision would be confined to a moment in time, a

matter of minutes or second; no, his vision remained everpresent. “Light that I see.” These are the words of the Prophet ﷺ, the master of creation (*sayyid al-khalq*).

So, this breath of faith, this light of faith, takes you to the station of *iḥsān* and through it you begin to worship the Merciful with the light of the Chosen One (*al-Muṣṭafā*) ﷺ. The matter is not insignificant. And therefore, if the matter is not insignificant to you, you will not step outside the circle of those who send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ. Because those who send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ, Allah sends blessings upon them and takes them from darkness to light. The rest is clear.

The Prophet ﷺ said would say in his supplication: “O Allah, place light in my heart, light in my hearing, light in my vision, and light in my speech…” (Muslim). So far, the light is internal and intangible. But then he would add, “and light on my right.” Now this goes beyond the body and pertains to direction. The human being has six directions: right, left, front, behind, above, and below. All of these are mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ in his supplication, which he would say five times a day when leaving his house to pray at the mosque. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ covers all the directions, surrounding an entire capsule, an illuminated glass. And he added, “and light in my hair,” the central point wherein the lamp is located within this illuminated glass. “And light in my skin, and light in my blood…” So, the Prophet, peace be upon him, did indeed call for light to permeate all aspects of his being.

The Prophet ﷺ also said, “Prayer is light (*nūr*), and fasting is radiance (*ḍiyā*’).” He’s what happens when you begin worshiping Allah “as if you see Him.” Meaning, when you enter prayer and say “Allahu Akbar,” it’s as though you’re witnessing the niche with a lamp inside it, encased in glass, as if it’s a resplendent planet. This is not something I’m saying, nor something a shaykh said, nor my shaykh. It’s what the Prophet ﷺ said. And what is radiance? It is also light, meaning there are different degrees of illumination.

The Almighty mentioned “light” in His Book approximately 36 times. What does He say about the people of light? **“Is the one who was dead, and We gave him life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people like one trapped in deep darkness and cannot escape?” (Q 6:122)**. This means that if you lack light, don’t rejoice and claim to be alive — you are dead. The measure between life and death is not based on the explanation of any scholar; it comes from the Almighty (Exalted and Glorified). This means that if the Truth (Allah) truly gives you life, then you are alive. But if you remain engrossed in play and distraction, you are dead. And you know where that leads in the end. The smallest house you will ever live in after your mother’s womb is the womb of the earth.

However, if you are truly alive, Allah gives you clear evidence and guidance: “We *made* for him a light” — “made” refers to something tangible, not abstract or symbolic. Because Allah says: “And We made for him a light by which he walks among the people” — not between people but among them, penetrating even their very being.

How is this so? The hadith of the Prophet ﷺ states: “Beware of the intuition (*fīrāsa*) of the believer, for he sees with the light of Allah” (Tirmidhi). It doesn’t say “with his feelings.” Nowadays, Sufism has become about emotions and sensations. Someone says, “*I attended a night of spirituality, it was luminescent*.” Describe this “light” to me. “*I felt peace*.” But if I went to a coffee shop, bought you a coffee, and we chatted, you’d feel peace too. So, what kind of luminescence are you talking about?

Do you see how the words luminescence and light have become distorted in common usage? This is all ignorance of the religion. If you truly understood the essence of the religion, by Allah (the Most High) you would feel ashamed of yourself. When you stand in prayer and look at your place of prostration, all you see is the prayer rug. That’s it. But all you see is its decorations, yet you are standing before the Truth (Allah). Your mind is preoccupied with your worries, your debts, your belongings, your spouse, your child, your

authority, and your power. So where has the light of prayer gone that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned? Where has the light of the chapter of The Light gone and its exemplifications? Does it remain hidden within the pages of the Qur'an?

How is your state, O human being? Your prayer has become so lacking that you've even abandoned fulfilling its basic conditions. You have no evidence, no sign through which you can communicate with the Lord (Exalted and Glorified). Look at the signs of our master, the Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him), the intimate companion (*khalīl*) and beloved (*ḥabīb*) of Allah. When **"he saw a planet and said, 'This is my Lord'" (Q 6:76)**, Allah did not say to him, "*Why do you say the star is your Lord? Have you associated the star with Me?*" When Ibrāhīm was in his spiritual seclusion, in the final third of the night whence Allah descends to the first heaven looking for the repentant servants, it was then that Ibrāhīm saw a resplendent planet, one of the four exemplifications of Allah's light. Then Ibrāhīm continued to supplicate until he saw a "rising moon" and said, **"This is my Lord" (Q 6:77)**. And then he saw a **"rising sun" (6:78),** the "sun of gnosis" (*shams al-maʿrifa*), so he was worshipping Allah "as if you see him." That is why he said, **"I have turned my face to the one who brought the heavens and the earth into being [out of nothing] (*faṭara*)" (Q 6:79)**.

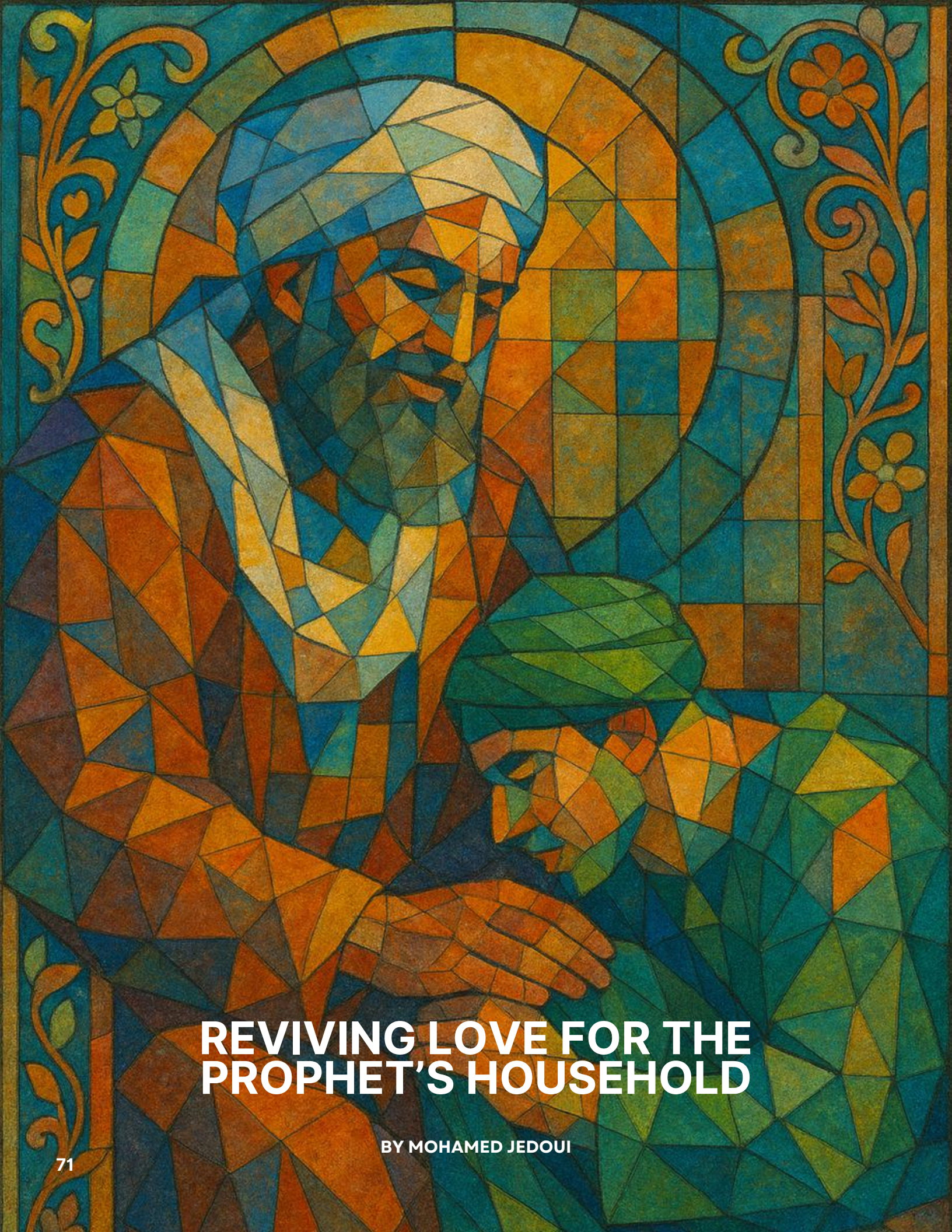
This is what Sufism is about. It is about the station of *iḥsān*, the highest station in the religion. If you deny this, then you deny the highest station in the religion. What's more, your understanding of the other two stations — *islām* and *īmān* — is flawed because for you īmān is mere speech, not light, and worship for you merely consists of physical movements.

If you accepted Allah's Light and it shined for you in your prayer so that your prayer became light, then your self (*nafs*) would be at peace (*muṭma'inna*) and return to its pleased and pleasing Allah (Q 89:27-28).

What gives the self inner peace is clear evidence (*bayyina*). This is why Mūsā (peace be upon him, the most mentioned prophet in the Qur'an, said **"My Lord, show Yourself to me that I may look at You" (7:143)**. Allah did not say, "*No, it is forbidden.*" Instead, Allah said: **"You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it remains in its place, then you will see Me?" (Q 7:143)** Then what happened? **"But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level" (Q 7:143)**. Allah didn't reveal Himself to Mūsā but to the mountain.

If you truly want to follow the way of the prophets — since you repeatedly recite, **"We make no distinction between any of His messengers" (Q 2:285)** — then why don't you follow this Sunnah of the prophets? Why don't you also align yourself with the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ?

ART BY HUMA AATIFI



REVIVING LOVE FOR THE PROPHET'S HOUSEHOLD

BY MOHAMED JEDOUI

The love of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) is a central yet often overlooked tenet in Islamic spirituality. Far from being merely a historical or genealogical concern, this love serves as a pathway to divine proximity and a means to embody the transformative ethics of Islam. This meditation delves into the spiritual and metaphysical implications of this love, presenting it not as an optional piety but as an obligation with profound theological ramifications. By referencing Qur'anic verses, Prophetic sayings, and the lived reality of the Prophet's descendants, this meditation positions *mawadda* (affection) for the progeny of the Prophet as a dynamic force that transcends personal loyalty, serving instead as a conduit for divine illumination and spiritual refinement. It invites the reader to perceive the ahl al-bayt as living embodiments of Prophetic mercy, guiding humanity and representing the rope of Allah that connects creation to the Creator.

This meditation also functions as a critique of the modern neglect of the *ahl al-bayt*, where the reverence owed to them has been eroded by ideological rigidity and sectarian polemics. This is not simply a lament for the past but a call to action for the present: a reawakening of love and commitment to the Prophet's family as an antidote to the spiritual fragmentation of our time. It challenges both the reader and myself to confront our assumptions about piety and lineage, reminding us that true fidelity to the Prophet, peace be upon him, is inseparable from fidelity to his family.

By anchoring devotion to the *ahl al-bayt* within the framework of divine command, love for the Prophet's progeny emerges as a bridge between the temporal and the eternal, a path to salvation and self-realization. I invite myself and my fellow Karkari disciples to embrace a paradigm where love is not merely felt but actively lived through sacrifice and service for the elite (*ʿitra*) of the Muḥammadan progeny, our master and guide, Sidi Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari.

The Love of the Prophet's Household: A Neglected Obligation Revived by the Truthful

Allah Most High says: **"Say [O Prophet]: 'I do not ask you for any reward except love for my near relatives (*al-qurbā*)'" (Q 42:23).** Islamic law (*al-sharʿ al-ḥanīf*) commands us to love the family of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. Allah does not seek recompense for this love because it transcends all forms of reward. Love surpasses any worldly compensation or narrow calculation.

Whoever tastes the affection (*mawadda*) of the Prophet's progeny, and embodies their qualities and closeness, and clings to it, is rewarded with a light and connection to the Chosen One, peace be upon him. Allah's use of the term mawadda (*affection*) in the Holy Qur'an is significant as it derives from wudd, which itself derives from *al-Wadūd* (the All-Affectionate), one of Allah's most beautiful names. *Al-Wadūd* is the unbreakable rope of Allah, and whoever is connected to this rope is truly connected to divine mercy and guidance.

This truth is affirmed by the authentic saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him, regarding his household. Pointing to his two beloved grandsons, the masters of the youth of Paradise, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, peace be upon them, he said: "Whoever loves them has loved me, and whoever loves me has loved Allah. Whoever despises them has despised me, and whoever despises me has despised Allah" (al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Māja, and Aḥmad).

In another narration, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr relates from Ibn ʿAbbās that when Allah revealed **"Say [O Prophet]: 'I do not ask you for any reward except love for my near relatives'" (Q 42:23)**, the people asked: "O Messenger of Allah, who are these near relatives whom we must love?" He replied: "ʿAlī, Fāṭima, and their two sons" (al-Ṭabarānī).

Thus, love for Allah flows through love for His Prophet, peace be upon him, and love for the Prophet is inseparable from love for his progeny. If a person feels anger when harm is done to their own grandchildren, how much greater should their outrage be when harm is directed

toward the purified descendants of the Purifier? The true lover of the Messenger of Allah rejoices in their joy, grieves in their sorrow, and sees in them nothing but the reflection of their grandfather, peace be upon him, even if apparent flaws or shortcomings are seemingly observed in them.

Their noble lineage cannot be equated with that of others. They are the people of unparalleled nobility, lineage, and distinction, without the need for boasting. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said while pointing to al-Hasan: "This son of mine is a master (*sayyid*)." His masterhood stems from the supreme masterhood of his grandfather, the Master of the Children of Adam, who said: "I am the master of the children of Adam, without boasting."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, also said: "Love Allah for the blessings He bestows upon you. Love me for the sake of Allah, and love my family for my sake" (Tirmidhi).

How can those who claim to follow the religion of the Chosen One, peace be upon him, neglect to honor his family? Instead, nowadays we see many muslims attack the noble descendants, tarnish their reputations, spread lies about them, and incite hatred against them — without any shame before their grandfather, peace be upon him. Such actions degrade these individuals to the lowest depths of distance from the Prophet, peace be upon him.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, granted his household a special distinction, elevating their rank above all others. He singled them out for a unique station that no one else attained. They are his noble progeny, through whom the lights of divine manifestations and the mercies of blessings flow. They inherited the heart of their grandfather, peace be upon him, and were granted his sainthood (*wilāya*) and spiritual seal (*khatmiyya*). They unveiled the truths of the Qur'an, lifted the veil from the sciences of elucidation (*bayān*), and guided the believers to the Lord of all creation. The final link in this blessed chain is our master and guide, Sidi Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, whom we witnessed manifesting miracles within ourselves and in the horizons.

The Chosen One, peace be upon him, collected in the purity of his household a sealed untouched nectar. Whoever strives to drink from the spring of this water, flowing from *al-Muntaḥā* (the ultimate endpoint), will have their heart directed toward the locus of divine selection and the cup of the righteous.

Clinging to their guidance ensures no misguidance thereafter — it is the firmest handhold, the ultimate guidance, and the uprightness of the purified ones.

Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh, may Allah be pleased with him, reported: "I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, during his pilgrimage on the Day of ʿArafa, standing on his camel al-Qaṣwā, giving a sermon. I heard him say: 'O people, I leave among you something which, if you hold onto it, you will never go astray: the Book of Allah and the elite (*ʿitra*) of my progeny, my household'" (Tirmidhi).

The honor of the Prophet's household lies in the nobility of their origin. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Every lineage and connection will be severed on the Day of Resurrection except my lineage and connection" (Ibn ʿAsākir, Tārīkh Dimashq).

Yet, some of those whose lineage is severed, who have partnered with Satan, audaciously attempt to teach the descendants of the Prophet their own grandfather's religion! Shamelessly, they accuse us of associating partners with Allah and spreading immorality. By doing so, they only expose their own ignoble origins, confirming the truth of the Prophet's words, peace be upon him, regarding those who despise the family of our master, ʿAlī, peace be upon him.

Ibn ʿAdī, al-Bayhaqī, Abū Shaykh, and al-Daylamī narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

"Whoever does not recognize my family (*ʿitra*) from among the the Helpers (Anṣār) and the Arabs is one of three: either a hypocrite, a child of adultery, or someone conceived during their mother's impurity" (*Yanābīʿ al-mawadda li-ehawī al-qurbā* by al-Qundūzī, Abū al-Shaykh, and al-Daylamī).

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī said: "We, the Anṣār, used to test our children's love for ʿAlī. If a child among us was born and did not love him, we knew they were not from us" (Ḥāfiẓ al-Jazarī, *Asnā al-maṭālib*).

ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit said: "We used to test our children with their love for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. If we saw one who did not love him, we knew they were illegitimate" (*Asnā al-maṭālib*).

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Jazarī commented in *Manāqib al-asad al-ghālib*: "This has been widely known in the past and remains so to this day. It is a well-established understanding that no one harbors hatred for ʿAlī, may Allah be pleased with him, except for one born out of wedlock."

The hadith collections of al-Ṭabarī, al-Dāraquṭnī, and others narrate Imam ʿAlī as saying: "Three will not love me: a hypocrite, a child of adultery, and one conceived during their mother's impurity."

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAdawī narrates: Ahmad ibn ʿAbda al-Ḍabbī reported from Abū ʿAyniyya, from Ibn al-Zubayr, from Jābir, who said: "The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his family, commanded us to test our children by their love for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib."

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Mardawayh narrates from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī, from ʿAbd Allah ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who said: "I heard al-Shāfiʿī say: I heard Mālik ibn Anas say: Anas ibn Mālik said, 'We did not know a man to be illegitimate except by his hatred for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.'"

Ibn Mardawayh narrated from Anas in a report: "After the day of Khaybar, a man would carry his child on his shoulder and stand in the path of ʿAlī. When he saw him, he would point with his finger and say: 'My son, do you love this man?' If the child said, 'Yes,' he would kiss him. If the child said, 'No,' he would send him to the ground and say, 'Go back to your mother.'"

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ṭabarī narrates in his *Kitāb al-wilāya* that ʿAlī said: "Three will not love me: the child of adultery, a hypocrite, and a man conceived during his mother's menstruation."

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dāraquṭnī and Shaykh al-Islām al-Ḥamawī narrate in *Farāʾid* from Anas Ibn Malik, that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "On the Day of Judgment, a pulpit

will be erected for me, and a caller will call out from beneath the Throne: 'Where is Muḥammad?' I will respond, and it will be said to me, 'Ascend.' I will ascend until I reach the top. Then the caller will call out a second time: 'Where is ʿAlī?' He will stand below me by one step, and all of creation will know that Muḥammad is the Master of the Messengers and ʿAlī is the Master of the Believers." Anas said: "A man stood up and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, who will hate ʿAlī after this?' The Prophet replied, 'O brother of the Helpers, no one from Quraysh will hate him except a disgraceful person, no one from the Helpers will hate him except a Jew, no one from the Arabs will hate him except an illegitimate person, and no one from the rest of humanity will hate him except a wretched soul.'"

Al-Ṭabarī reported that Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, in a tent, reclining on an Arabian bow, with ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn. He said: 'O Muslims! I am at peace with those at peace with the people of this tent. I am at war with those at war with them. I am a friend to whoever befriends them. No one loves them except one of pure lineage, and no one hates them except one of impure lineage'" (al-Riyāḍ al-naḍra fī manāqib al-ʿashara).

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd narrates in his commentary, Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha, on the authority of Abū Maryam al-Anṣārī, who reported that ʿAlī said: "No disbeliever or child of adultery will love me."

Al-Masʿūdī narrates in *Murūj al-dhahab* from Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Nawfalī, the uncle of the Prophet, peace be upon him, al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib said: "I was with the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, when ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib approached. When the Prophet saw him, his face lit up with joy. I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! You brighten your face whenever you see this young man.' He replied, 'O uncle of the Messenger of Allah! By Allah, Allah loves him more than I do. I do. There was no prophet whose remaining lineage was not from his own loins, but my progeny after me will be from his loins. On the Day of Judgment, people will be called by their names and their mothers' names, except for him and his followers — they will be called by their names and their fathers' names due to the purity of their lineage.'"

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reported in Tārīkh baghdād that Ibn ʿAbbās said: "While we were in the courtyard of the Kaʿba, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was speaking to us when something enormous, as large as the biggest of elephants, suddenly emerged from the direction of the Yemeni Corner. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, spat in its direction and said, 'Cursed,' or 'Disgraced.' ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib asked, 'What is this, O Messenger of Allah?' The Prophet replied, 'Do you not recognize it, O ʿAlī?' ʿAlī said, 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' The Prophet said, 'This is Iblīs.' ʿAlī leaped toward him, grabbed him by the forelock, and dragged him away from his place. Then he asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, should I kill him?' The Prophet replied, 'Do you not know that he has been granted respite until the appointed time?' ʿAlī then released him. Iblīs stood to the side and said, 'What do I have to do with you, O son of Abī Ṭālib? By Allah, no one has ever hated you except that I shared with his father in conceiving him. Recite Allah's words: "And share with them in wealth and children" (Q 17:64).'"

Al-Zamakhsharī reports in *al-Kashshāf* that Ḥudhayfa said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah holding the hand of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, saying, 'O people! The grandfather of al-Ḥusayn is more honored before Allah than the grandfather of Yūsuf ibn Yaʿqūb. Al-Ḥusayn is in Paradise, his father is in Paradise, his mother is in Paradise, his brother is in Paradise, his lover is in Paradise, and the one who loves his lover is also in Paradise.'"

These hadiths highlight an eternal truth: love for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his family is more than a personal sentiment — it is a divine marker of purity, sincerity, and true faith. Those who harbor animosity toward the family of the Prophet do not diminish their luminous legacy; instead,

they unveil their own moral and spiritual failings, fulfilling the prophetic words that only the impure and hypocritical despise ʿAlī. Can anyone claiming to follow the Prophet turn away from the very household he elevated as a source of guidance and light? Love for ʿAlī is not just a virtue; it is a testament to one's place among those chosen by the Most Merciful.

Al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī reports in *Shawāhid al-tanzīl* that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "The one with the most light on the Day of Judgment will be the one with the most love for the family of Muḥammad." He also reported: "By Allah, no servant loves my family except that Allah grants them light until they meet me at the Pond, and no servant hates my family except that Allah veils them from His presence on the Day of Judgment."

Al-Munāwī reports in Fayḍ al-qadīr sharḥ al-jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "My intercession for my community is for the one who loves my family." Indeed, there is no intercession without their love, and no protection without their connection.
Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in al-Tafsīr al-kabīr, quotes the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, as saying: "Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad dies as a martyr. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad dies forgiven. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad dies in a state of repentance. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad dies a believer, perfected in faith. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad is given glad tidings of Paradise by the Angel of Death, followed by Munkar and Nakīr. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad will be adorned and escorted to Paradise as a bride is escorted to her husband. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad will have two doors to Paradise opened in their grave. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad will have their grave made a place visited by the angels of mercy. Whoever dies with love for the family of Muḥammad dies upon the Sunna and the community. But whoever dies with hatred for the family of Muḥammad will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment with 'Hopeless of Allah's Mercy' inscribed upon their forehead. Whoever dies with hatred for the family of Muḥammad dies a disbeliever."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, teaches the world that whoever dies with hatred for his progeny will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise. How, then, can one doubt the rank and stature of the family of the Master of all of Existence, peace be upon him? Thus, the pen has dried (jaffa al-qalam)…

These traditions demonstrate that the love of the Prophet's family transcends mere formalities. They invite us to recalibrate our understanding of love. Devotion to the ahl al-bayt is not a peripheral aspect of faith but its luminous core. This love is an ethical and metaphysical imperative upon all believers, one that bridges the temporal realm with the eternal. It serves as a reminder that the path to divine proximity is not paved by abstract rituals but by active alignment with the Prophet's mercy as manifest in his lineage.

I understand that these hadiths might seem challenging for readers unfamiliar with this dimension of our faith, particularly Muslims in the West or those from urban areas influenced by modernist or Salafi interpretations. Yet, these are not my words but the words of the Prophet and his blessed companions. We should not shy away from sharing them. This is our religion, and we take pride in every word spoken by our Prophet. In a world fragmented by sectarianism and often detached from the sanctity of Prophetic tradition, these reports indeed challenge contemporary believers to reassess their priorities.

Loving the ahl al-bayt is not about passive admiration but about embodying the values they represent: mercy, purity, humility, and an unwavering commitment to truth. This love is a connection to the rope of Allah, uniting the heart with its luminous origin.

THE PROPHETIC DIET

BY MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Especially Merciful.

A question was asked regarding the spiritual path: "Does asceticism (*zuhd*) in eating for the sake of Allah weaken the body?"

The path to Allah is one of balance, not of extremes that harm the vessel He has given us. Asceticism in eating serves a specific purpose: it lessens the power of base desire (*shahwa*). However, this must be understood with wisdom. The great Shaykh al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, may Allah sanctify his secret, used to say, with a laugh, "Remember Allah abundantly and eat abundantly!"

The ultimate guide is our Master, the Prophet Muḥammad, the Chosen One (*al-Muṣṭafā*), peace and blessings be upon him, who said: "Fast, and you will be healthy" (*ṣūmū taṣiḥḥū*). The outcome of your fast depends on your intention. If you fast seeking physical health, you will attain health. If you fast as an act of worship, it will become a source of spiritual light. And if you fast purely for Allah, then Allah Himself is your reward. The Prophet ﷺ said that the fasting person has two joys (*farḥatān*): the joy when breaking the fast and the joy when meeting their Lord. When you fast for Allah, you gain everything.

As for our daily eating habits, the rule is simple and clear: "We do not eat until we are hungry, and when we eat, we do not eat until we are full." You must always leave a space, a small emptiness. The Prophet ﷺ gave us the perfect division of the stomach: one-third for food, one-third for water, and one-third for air. This is the foundation for a healthy body and a clear spirit.

Now, what should we eat? The Qur'an gives us the ideal diet, saying the inhabitants of Paradise will have, **"Fruit of what they select, and the meat of fowl, from whatever they desire" (Q 56:20-21)**. Notice the divine order: first fruit (*fākiha*), which is light, then meat (*laḥm ṭayr*), which is heavier. Our mistake in modern times is that we treat fruit as a dessert or an extra indulgence, not as a primary food. We must return to this principle and eat fruit as a substantial part of our meal. From the fruits available, one should choose what is mentioned in the Qur'an and the Sunna, and what is suitable for one's own body.

After the fruit comes the meat. If you desire an increase in strength and vigor (*al-quwwa wa-al-bāha*), you can increase your intake of meat. Specifically, the meat of fowl is known to strengthen desire, so a person who is not married might wish to reduce its consumption. The best of meats is what was most beloved to the Prophet ﷺ: the shoulder of a ewe that had not given birth, which he preferred to eat grilled. Here, we are speaking of what is most excellent (*afḍaliyya*). This does not mean it is forbidden (ḥarām) to eat other parts of the sheep or other

animals that Allah has made lawful.

So, when we apply the rule of thirds, we can understand it this way: the one-third portion for food can be composed of both fruit and meat. Then, you fill the second third with water. And the final third you leave empty for air, for ease of breath. You should eat first, and then drink, just as the Qur'an states: **"Eat and drink" (kulū wa-shrabū) (Q 2:187)**. A sincere seeker should research the foods that the Prophet ﷺ loved and used in his daily life and try to incorporate them into their own.

While these are the guidelines for daily eating, the best of all practices for the total benefit of the body and the soul is fasting (*ṣiyām*). Its entire value is contained within the intention (*niyya*). True fast can grant you experiential knowledge of Allah's attribute of al-Ṣamadāniyya — His reality as al-Ṣamad, the Self-Sufficient upon whom all depend. This is especially true when fasting is combined with wakefulness in the night.

The basic meaning of fasting is to hold back from the outward desires of food, drink, and intimacy. However, there is a higher level of fasting, the fast of the elect (*al-khawāṣṣ*). This is to hold back even from speaking, following the example of our lady Maryam, peace be upon her, who took a vow of silence. You can make your entire day a complete fast: a fast from food, drink, physical desire, and from all speech, while occupying your tongue and heart with abundant remembrance of Allah. This state reflects the attribute of al-Ṣamadāniyya and serves as an entry point into it through the lights of the Lord, for the seeker whom Allah has unveiled His light, as in our path, the Karkariyya.

It is in such a state that when one makes supplication, Allah responds immediately without delay. We see this in the story of Prophet Zakariyyā, peace be upon him, who received his miracle while in such a state.

This brings us back to the two joys of the fasting person: the joy of breaking the fast and the joy of meeting their Lord — the luminous disclosure that is followed by the answered supplication arising from that pure, luminous state of complete fasting, accompanied by witnessing.

THE CLIMATE CRISIS AS SPIRITUAL CRISIS

BY RAMI KOUJAH

The climate catastrophe undoubtedly represents an existential crisis for humanity at large. But that's not all. When asked about this recently, Sīdī Shaykh Muḥammad Faouzi al-Karkarī (QS) recently remarked that the crisis is above all spiritual.

What is the root cause of it all? Not greenhouse gases and rising temperatures, which are but symptoms. Rather, Sīdī Shaykh says, the source of the crisis is twofold: the proliferation of sin and neglecting the duty of *zakāt*. In fact, the Shaykh adds, the cause can really be reduced to

love for wealth, or a materialist obsession with the body to the neglect of the spirit (al-rūḥ).

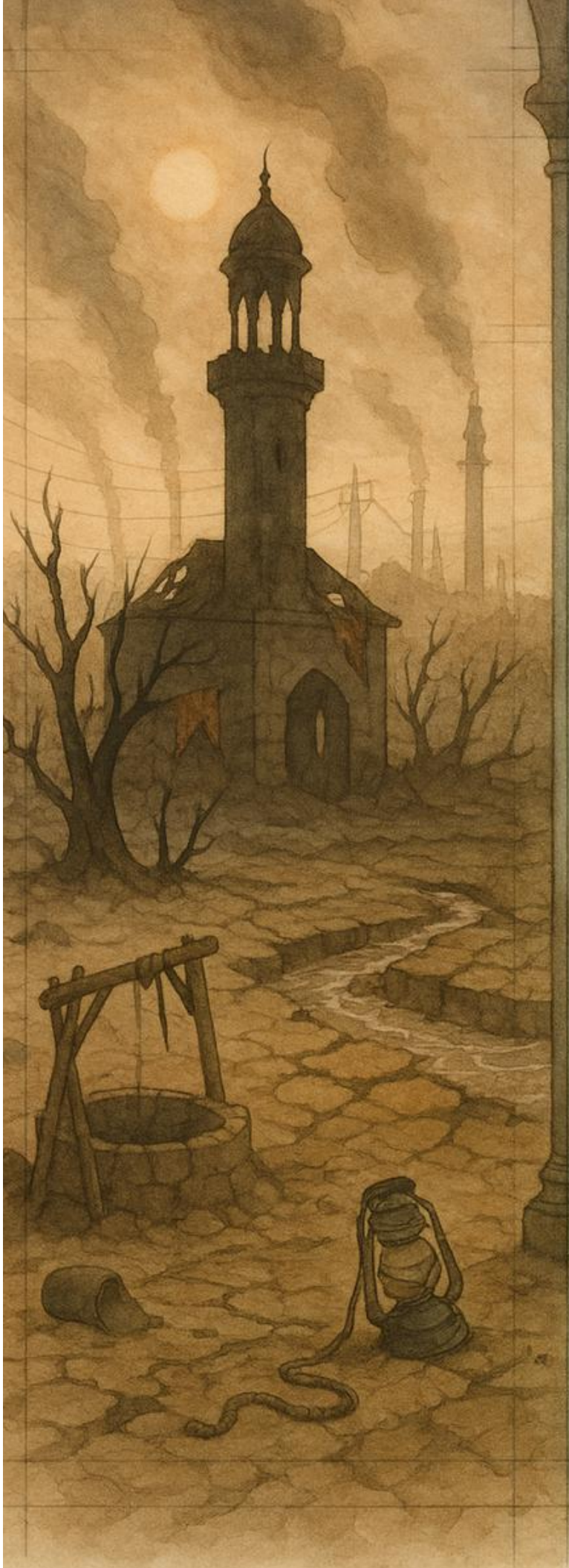
Overwhelmingly, the solutions put forward to address the climate crisis are proving ineffectual. The climate will not be saved by using fewer drinking straws or reusable tote bags. Nor will policy initiatives like the Green New Deal that offer "sustainable growth" save us. This is because, as Kōhei Saitō lucidly argues in Slow Down: The Degrowth Manifesto, care for the environment is fundamentally incompatible with capitalism.

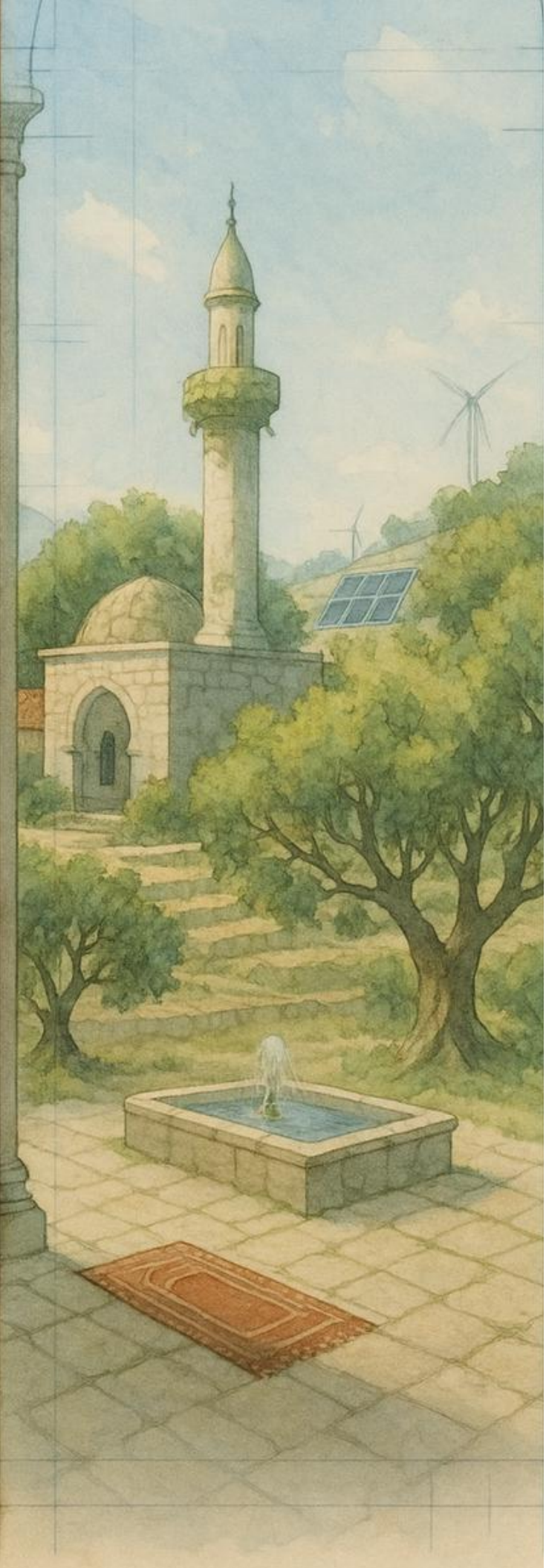
Capitalism, as an economic system that depends on perpetual growth and profit accumulation, is an ideology of insatiable consumption, or what the Qur'an calls "takāthur" (Q 102:1). Thus, just as Sīdī Shaykh states, the problem is at its root spiritual.

For Saitō and others, the only solution to saving the environment — and avoiding the exploitation of countries and individuals in the Global South who subsidize, with their bodies and resources, the consumption habits of those in the Global North — is through what he calls "degrowth," or living with less. That means that one does not need to shop "fast fashion" to replace their wardrobe every year, nor upgrade their iPhone annually. Fast fashion, an industry notorious for its abuse of servile labor, including Syrian children refugees and Uyghurs forced to work in Chinese concentration camps, has devastating impacts on the environment. Likewise, iPhones, like many other devices with rechargeable batteries, require cobalt, a metal that is largely mined by modern-day slave labor.

Though Saitō does not diagnose the problem as spiritual, it clearly is from the Sufi perspective. Sīdī Shaykh reminds us of the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ (Ibn Mājah):

> Oh Emigrants (*al-muhājirūn*), you will be tested with five things, and I seek refuge in Allah that you live to see them. Immorality does not manifest among a people such that they commit it openly except that plagues and diseases will spread that were unknown to





> their predecessors. They will not cheat in weights and measures except they will be stricken with famine, severe calamity, and the oppression of their rulers. They will not withhold paying *zakāt* on their wealth except that rain from the skies will be withheld; and had it not been for the animals there would be no rain. They do not break their Covenant with Allah and His Messenger except that any enemy will overpower them and take what they have. And unless their leaders rule by the Book of Allah and seek good from what Allah revealed, then Allah will cause infighting among them.

The truth of the Prophet's ﷺ words is plainly evident. This is why the disciple, Sīdī Shaykh says, must cultivate asceticism (*zuhd*). One cannot be a gnostic (*ʿārif*) until gold and dirt are viewed as equivalent. The point is not to relinquish all of one's belongings, but to detach one's heart from what's material and utilize whatever material blessings Allah favors one with to fulfill their obligations to Him, i.e., *zakāt*.

As Sīdī Shaykh says, just as the problem is spiritual, so too the solution must also be: *istighfār*, or seeking forgiveness from Allah. That is where the Karkarī knows to begin, but follows up also with abstaining from the illicit, fulfilling obligations, and remembering (*dhikr*), supplicating (*duʿā*'), and pleading (*munājāt*) with Allah.

The Karkarī's spiritual praxis is not only for themselves, Sīdī Shaykh says, but for the benefit of humanity at large. Through repentance and prayer, we beseech Allah to overlook the harm we've caused to the environment and the destruction we've brought against ourselves. But moreover, we must be sure to treat the earth, and all the material blessings Allah bestowed upon us, as a Trust (*amāna*) that comes with a sacred duty: to recognize the earth as a gift, not a commodity for our consumption.

Allah is "The Generous" (*al-Karīm*), "The Giver" (*al-Muʿṭī*), and "The Provider" (*al-Razzāq*). As such, it is not the earth's limited resources that is the cause of scarcity, but our unlimited appetites.

AN UNQUENCHABLE THIRST

BY MOHAMED AZIZ ZARGLAYOUN

What is this thirst that cannot be quenched,
By light that shines and secrets in taste (*dhawq*) recited?

I have erased all the pasts and the futures,
For you are all my wishes.

O my remembrance (*dhikrī*) and my silence (*ṣamtī*),
O my presence (*ḥuḍūrī*) and my absence (*ghaybatī*),

O my thoughts (*fikrī*) and my musings (*khāṭirī*),
O all that my eye (*ʿaynī*) beholds.

Your meanings never leave my soul's embrace,
Not in my sleep, nor in my wakefulness.

You have taken all that I possess,
My hearing, my sight, my hands, and my legs.

In the garment of Eid, you have clothed me,
And with a robe of agate (*ʿaqīq*) adorned me.

With your light, you extinguished my fires,
And planted gardens of eternity (*khuld*) and rivers.

Then my mind (*ʿaqlī*) grasped in a moment from eternity's glance,
That you are me, the essence of my very essence.

The gaze upon the beauty of your countenance,
That is for your servant the day of abundance (*al-mazīd*).

Some of your beauty made me intoxicated, free,
It took away my mind (*ʿaqlī*) and all of me.

It made me forget my companions (*akhillāʾī*) and my kin (*ahlī*),
My neighborhood (*ḥayyī*) and my home (*baytī*) where once I've been.

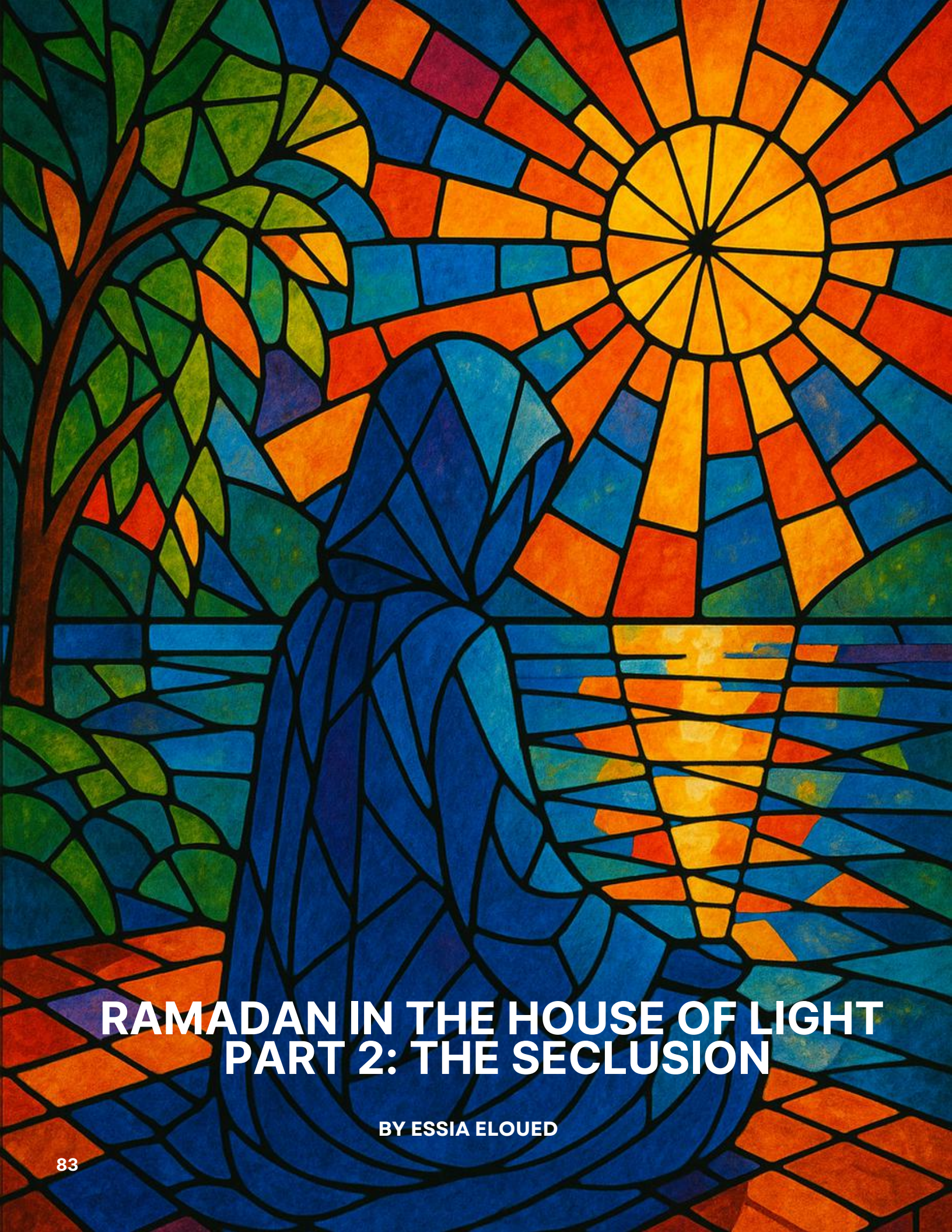
O all of me,
Beyond name (*ism*) or description (*waṣf*), unbound.

Your closeness (*qurb*) only increases my thirst,
And does not heal the wound of my love, cursed.

This is a tale told, O dear, sincerely,
Of a youth (*fatan*) enamored with al-Karkari.

Inform them, O confidants, that I have no patience (*ṣabr*),
For the separation (*firaq*) from my beloved and essence.

For that is my homeland (*waṭanī*) bright,
And otherwise, my blood is lawful and plight.



RAMADAN IN THE HOUSE OF LIGHT PART 2: THE SECLUSION

BY ESSIA ELOUED

In the contemporary history of humanity, no pandemic has ever been as devastating, deadly, or dramatic as COVID-19. Around the globe, the death toll climbed into the millions, sparing neither East nor West, developed nor developing nations.

Mandatory lockdowns, declared in unison across the world, paralyzed all vital sectors of society. Only sanitation and security services, alongside the ever-present hum of social networks, were permitted to continue. Essential supply chains for food and medicine operated at a skeletal capacity. For weeks on end, schools, government offices, public transit, and countless businesses shuttered their doors. All international travel — by air, sea, and land — ground to a halt.

People were confined to their homes, venturing out only for the bare necessities of food and medicine. The images broadcast across televisions and social media feeds were apocalyptic: millions dead; hospitals overflowing with patients in acute respiratory distress, spilling out onto the surrounding streets; critical shortages of oxygen and medicine; exhausted medical personnel; and the final indignity of mass graves, where victims, shrouded in black plastic, were buried without ceremony. It was a time of horror.

What everyone hoped would last a few weeks stretched into months. The pandemic relentlessly returned in waves, each time with a new variant, each more vicious than the last. It was in this climate, in April of 2021, that the holy month of Ramadan arrived. Across the Muslim world, the faithful prepared to observe the fast under unprecedented conditions.

Meanwhile, nestled in the small Moroccan village of Lahouissia, in the region of Al Aaroui, some thirty disciples of the Karkari order, both men and women, were compelled to spend the holy month within the walls of the Karkari *zāwiya* (lodge) — the House of Light, a small parcel of paradise on Earth. Here, life was tranquil, imbued with a profound serenity and joy. There was no fear of illness, no panic, no masks, no social distancing. There were only group prayers, collective invocations, the timeless teachings of their guide, Sidi Shaykh, and the sacred rhythms of Ramadan: the Friday gatherings, the late-night vigils, and the pre-dawn prayers. Despite the stringent travel bans imposed by the Moroccan authorities, life within the zāwiya felt almost perfect.

Among the disciples was a Tunisian visitor named Essia. She had arrived with her husband during a brief window when the borders had opened, never imagining that she would spend the most beautiful Ramadan of her life in the midst of a global tragedy. Her intended two-week visit turned into an indefinite stay when travel restrictions were suddenly reinstated, stranding her in a place that would become the setting for an unforgettable spiritual awakening.

Never before had she dedicated so much of her life to the remembrance of God. Her days were a seamless flow of seeking forgiveness, reciting prayers upon the Prophet, reading the Qur'an, performing voluntary devotions, and absorbing the wisdom of Sidi Shaykh's lessons. The pandemic, the very reason for her confinement, faded into the background. Every day, she thanked God for leading her to this sanctuary of light.

The first three weeks of Ramadan passed in this blessed state. In the fourth week, several other female disciples, who lived in the surrounding areas, were able to join them. Then, on the twenty-third day of Ramadan, a disciple arrived from Casablanca. A whisper went through the *zāwiya* that Sidi Shaykh had personally invited her to undertake the *khulwa* (spiritual seclusion). Another rumor soon followed: a second disciple, already present among them, would also be entering seclusion on the very same day. A quiet buzz of speculation filled the air as the women wondered who the chosen one might be. Essia, the visitor, listened to their conversations, entirely unsuspecting.

The next day, after the afternoon prayer, one of the senior disciples approached Essia. It was she, she was told, whom Sidi Shaykh had chosen. The news struck her with such force

that she nearly stumbled. How could she be worthy of such an honor? The other women rushed to congratulate her, their faces beaming with joy. Essia, however, was overcome with a storm of conflicting emotions: happiness mingled with a profound anxiety. She began to sob, unable to explain the tears, but was soothed by the sincere joy of the senior disciples who had already experienced the transformative power of the *khulwa*.

The two small rooms designated for seclusion were quickly vacated and thoroughly cleaned. After bathing, Essia was gently guided through the rules of her retreat. She was to be cut off from the world, yet allowed one final contact with her husband and children, who were also at the *zāwiya*. Her son Mohamed, who had undertaken the seclusion himself, was overjoyed for her.

The room was prepared with ascetic simplicity: a mattress in the center, a few cushions for support, and a heavy cloth over the window to create a deep, unbroken darkness. Essia was instructed to begin her invocations and to remain silent, using a pen and paper if she needed anything. Sidi Shaykh, she was told, would visit her after the afternoon prayer.

As promised, he arrived, accompanied by his wife. He greeted her warmly and, knowing of her back trouble, advised her to lean against the wall for support. Her task, he explained, was simple yet all-encompassing: she was to invoke the Supreme Name of God, Allah, ceaselessly. She was to stop only for the prescribed prayers, for the meals brought to her, or for sleep. All other voluntary devotions were to be set aside. “Live these blessed days to the fullest,” he urged her. “Forget everything outside these walls. Remember only that you are in the presence of your Lord. This is a chance to experience your own grave, here on earth, before death comes.” He promised to return the next day.

A senior disciple, Hafsiya, tended to her needs, bringing a generous meal to break her fast and another before dawn, leaving in silence each time. Essia surrendered to the rhythm of the darkness, her voice repeating the sacred Name.

When Sidi Shaykh returned the following day, he asked her to describe any visions she had experienced. He listened, then pressed her to go deeper, to concentrate more intensely.

On the third day, a vision finally broke through. Her familiar, benevolent star appeared, then expanded into a vast cosmic niche. She felt herself drawn inside, propelled on a journey through the cosmos. Planets of countless shapes and sizes rushed past her at an impossible speed, leaving her dizzy and breathless when the vision receded.

She recounted the experience to Sidi Shaykh, but he seemed displeased. “Why,” he asked, his tone firm, “can you not let go in the presence of your Lord? Why do you still cling to the world outside? Your family is proud of you; they would trade places with you in an instant. Your children in America and your mother in Tunisia are in God’s protection. There is nothing you can do for them. Outside, there is only calumny, falsehood, strife, and sorrow. Live in this moment. Embrace this gift from God.”

Then he paused. “For this reason, I ask if you will agree to a fourth night in seclusion.”

Through her tears, she nodded. She understood that her guide knew what she needed better than she did herself.

By now, she had grown accustomed to the profound darkness. The passage of time and the world outside had dissolved. She was forgetting herself, becoming one with her invocation. And then, the visions returned, each more astonishing than the last. She witnessed the reality of the Qur’anic verse: **“The Day when We will roll up the heavens like a scroll of parchment”** (Q 21:104). She saw herself deceased, wrapped in a white burial shroud, her face radiant and serene. She was floating peacefully, weightless, several feet above the ground. Her being had split in two: one self below, still invoking the Supreme Name, and another above, observing with a gentle smile from a ceiling that had dissolved into infinity.

As the time for the dawn prayer approached, she performed her ablutions. Standing for the second cycle of the prayer, she was startled to see an intense light bloom where her prayer mat lay. As she recited the opening chapter of the Qur'an, the light grew, consuming everything in the room. The mattress, the walls, the ceiling, the door — all vanished, replaced by a brilliant, beautiful white radiance.

When she bowed, she saw only light. Her entire body had become light. A wave of dizziness washed over her, but a single thought anchored her: I must complete my prayer. The light intensified until she herself was nothing but light, her consciousness the only remaining witness. She prostrated, completed her prayer, and raised her hands in supplication. There, in the center of her luminous palms, an image of impossible beauty materialized: a celestial jewel, like a great diamond the size of a pear, blazing with a light so fierce it seemed to emanate from a thousand facets. She feared its brilliance would blind her. Never had she conceived of such beauty.

A sob broke from hern— not of grief, but of dissolution. It was the sound of a lifetime of walls collapsing into dust. Tears streamed down her face like a river of gratitude, washing away the last remnants of her former self — gratitude beyond the reach of words. At that moment, she understood why her guide had prolonged her seclusion: it was to bring her here.

Slowly, as if the universe were breathing out, the light began to recede. The celestial diamond did not vanish but seemed to dissolve into her, its radiance settling deep within her soul. The familiar outlines of the room — the mattress, the walls, the door — gently returned into view. Yet they were not the same. The mundane space was now sanctified, a silent witness to a divine encounter.

A profound longing arose in her to remain in that state of luminous union forever. But as the feeling crested, it transformed into a quiet, unshakable peace. The moment had not ended; it had been integrated. It was a new foundation upon which her life would be built, a secret certainty that would illuminate all her days to come. She wept still, but now her tears were of quiet wonder and praise to the Giver of such gifts.

Exhausted and utterly remade, she finally surrendered to sleep, her soul cradled by the memory of an impossible light.

For this was the 27th night of Ramadan — Laylat al-Qadr, the Night of Destiny. It is the night when divine grace descends upon the receptive soul of a sincere seeker, bestowing the innermost secret of sacred intimacy.

UNVEILING THE NAME: A JOURNEY THROUGH SURAT AL-RAḤMĀN

BY SHAYKH MOAHMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

In the Name of God, Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

Many of you inquired about the final verse of Sūrat al-Raḥmān (Q 55) and the meaning of the prostration of the grass and the tree. These are not separate inquiries; they are two sides of the same luminous coin. To understand the end of this chapter, we must begin where the chapter itself begins: with the Name of al-Raḥmān (The Most Merciful).

Know that this is no ordinary Name. It is the first name to be cleft from the ultimate Name of Essence, Allah. It is both a Name of attribute (*ism ṣifa*) and a Name pointing towards the essence (*ism dhāt*). It is the very Name by which He established Himself upon the Throne: **"The Most-Merciful established Himself upon the Throne" (*al-Raḥmān ʿalā al-ʿArsh istawā*) (Q 20:5)**. Do not take this Name lightly. Its letters are among *qawāsim* of the Qur'an — the disjointed letters by which Allah swears in the Qur'an. The letters *alif*, *lām*, and *rāʾ* appear as one such oath in Qur'an 10:1; *ḥāʾ* and *mīm* are repeated many times as oaths (e.g., Q 40:1); and nūn appears in **"*Nūn*. By the pen…" (Q 68:1)**, yet another oath. These letters are not arbitrary — they hold secrets only grasped by those with illuminated hearts.

Consider the structure of this blessed chapter of al-Raḥmān. It has seventy-seven verses. Our Prophet ﷺ taught us that faith (*īmān*) has seventy-odd branches, the highest of which is the declaration, "There is no god but Allah" (*lā ilāha illā Allah*). The spiritual path laid out in this chapter is a journey through these seventy-seven branches.

And what is the highest branch, the culmination of this journey? It is the final verse: **"Blessed is the Name of your Lord, Possessor of Majesty and Generous Nobility" (*tabāraka ismu rabbika dhī al-jalāli wa-al-ikrām*) (Q 55:77)**. The blessing invoked, "*tabāraka*," is upon the Name of your Lord. Which Name? It is the Name that opened the chapter: al-Raḥmān. Thus, the verse proclaims the blessedness of the Name al-Raḥmān, the Possessor of Majesty and Generous Nobility. This is why we are taught to call upon Him frequently with this Name. Your path as a seeker is to traverse these verses, to witness the "blessings" (*ālāʾ*) of God in creation, until you are led to the reality of the Name *al-Raḥmān*. From there, you grasp the nature of the Throne and the Footstool and you are moved to the Majestic Name, Allah.

How does one arrive at this? Through the contemplation of His beauty in creation. And where does this knowledge come from? Let us look at the very first verse: **"*al-Raḥmān* taught the Qur'an" (Q 55:1)**. This tells us everything. The Teacher is al-Raḥmān. The knowledge of the Qur'an is not something you merely acquire from books or men; it is a knowledge you must receive directly from Him, from His name al-Raḥmān. This is a form of direct revelation (*waḥī ilhām*) that is poured into a purified heart.

Do you see the secret here? The numerical value of the word *walī* (saint) is seventy-seven. The message for you, O seeker, is this: if you wish to become a *walī*, you must realize within yourself the blessings of Sūrat al-Raḥmān. This is not about being a mere memorizer of the Book (*ḥāfiẓ*), but about possessing knowledge of the Book (*ʿilm bi-kitāb Allah*). You can spend a lifetime memorizing, but that is only the beginning of learning.

The great Shaykh al-ʿAlawī al-Mustaghānimī hinted at this when he said, "I stood beneath the ceiling of the Throne of al-Raḥmān, and what a state it was!" He had arrived at the furthest point of creation and was taking knowledge directly from the Source, al-Raḥmān. And remember the noble Companion Ḥārithah (may Allah be pleased with him), who, when asked about his faith, declared, "It is as if I see the Throne of my Lord manifest." He too was receiving knowledge from this station.

This is the reality for the Friends of God (*awliyāʾ*). If you do not turn your entire being towards al-Raḥmān and wayfare through the station laid out in this chapter, you will not receive this true knowledge of the Qur'an. Indeed, He taught

you the Qur'an before your creation, on the Day of the Covenant when you answered **"Yes" (*balā*) (Q 7:172)**. What He taught you after your birth into this world is the science of discernment (*al-bayān*): the discernment of that virgin, transcendent knowledge within the cosmic manifestations (**"He taught [man] the discernment," (Q 55:2)**).

Now we come to your second question, concerning the prostration of the grass and the tree (Q 55:4). On the outward level (*ẓāhir*), *al-najm* refers to the low-lying plant, and *al-shajar* to the tall, rooted tree. But in the realm of inner meanings (*ḥukm al-maʿānī*), *al-Najm* — the Star — is the light of gnosis (*nūr al-maʿrifa*) that dawns in the heart of the sincere seeker. *Al-Shajar* — the Tree — is the deeply rooted origin of that light: the shaykh (spiritual guide).

Here, we must reflect on the sun and the moon mentioned in the previous verses. The sun is the Sun of Gnosis (*shams al-maʿrifa*), and the moon is the Moon of Certainty (*qamar al-yaqīn*). This is the meeting point between the Law (*sharīʿa*) and the Reality (*ḥaqīqa*) — a twofold path of wayfaring: outward and inward, granting both exoteric and esoteric knowledge — of what is manifest and what is transcendent. The sun and the moon are markers on your path toward closeness to the Real and the True, just as their physical counterparts serve as measures for our daily lives — both worldly and religious.

The Star is the disciple; the Tree is the shaykh. The verse reveals to us a fundamental state of the path: "*yasjudān*," they both prostrate. The one who has arrived (*al-wāṣil*) and the one who is just beginning must exist in a state of perpetual prostration (*sujūd*) before al-Raḥmān. Your journey, then, is to travel, equipped with this constant prostration, from being a star reflecting a distant light to becoming a tree, firmly rooted, a source of shade and fruit for others. You travel from the light of the *najm* to annihilation (*fanāʾ*)

in the presence of the *shajar* of your guide, there you arrive at the reality of the Name al-Raḥmān. Then you yourself become a blessed locus of manifestation (*majlā*) for the final verse, embodying the majesty (*jalāl*) and generous nobility (*karam*) of your Lord. The chapter then guides us further: **"And the sky He raised, and He set the Balance" (*wa-al-samāʾa rafaʿahā wa-waḍaʿa al-mīzān*) (Q 55:5)**. The sky was raised to establish this Balance (*mīzān*), this distinguisher between high and low. You, O seeker, must become an embodiment of this just Balance (*ṣāḥib al-mīzān al-ʿadlī*), a unifying isthmus (*barzakh*) for within you is gathered all of creation. And then comes the grave warning: **"That you not transgress within the Balance" (*allā taṭghaw fī al-mīzān*) (Q 55:6)**. I say to you, beware! Beware of giving one pan of the scale its due at the expense of the other. If you lose your inner balance, you lose heaven and earth. Look at the fate of Qārūn, who transgressed and was swallowed by the earth, leaving nothing but a story (Q 28:76-82). When the balance is lost, the higher collapses upon the lower.

And so, you must understand that this entire chapter is a trace (*athar*) of the Name al-Raḥmān. It is a wall (*sūr*) and an isthmus (*barzakh*) revealing and mirroring the reality of that Name. If you travel through its seventy-seven verses with sincerity, you will taste the blessing (*baraka*) of the Name al-Raḥmān, "Possessor of Majesty and Generous Nobility." Most of us find this chapter easy to read and connect with thanks to the merciful refrain, "Then which of the favors of your Lord will you both deny?" (*fa-bi-ayyi ālāʾi rabbikumā tukadhdhibān*). But you must reflect deeply on the fact that this very question — so melodic, so gentle — is being asked of you again and again, with every breath. It is not merely poetic; it is a call to wakefulness, a divine prod meant to shake you from your denial of these immense truths. Do not claim you had any prior knowledge of these realities. Instead, descend into your own darknesses so that you may ascend through the branches of faith (*īmān*) toward the source of sainthood (*wilāya*) and mercy (*raḥma*).

We pray that God guides you and us to the Truth and to sincere repentance. May He allow us to travel this blessed path from its beginning in the Name al-Raḥmān to its culmination, where we become a living reflection of its Majesty and Generous Nobility. Amen.

ECHOES OF ETERNAL TRUTH

BY MAROUEN JEDOUI

This is an attempt to translate a poem I originally wrote in Arabic, reflecting on the journey toward Allah.

Purify your heart, O critic severe,
Truth is Truth, unaltered and pure,
How can you declare *tawḥīd* aloud,
You've only grasped a science confined
This is a unique path, so you must seek
Humans grasp from its truth only
The Shaykh is essential for every stride,
Foundations of knowledge that spiritually grounds;
From it, the ranks descend and flow;
In the divine name, you traverse the heights,
and do not ignore what is clearly near.
though others may try to make it obscure.
while remaining a slave to the lines so proud?
to the outward creed of the Ashʿarīs' mind.
its meanings from the Lord, sublime and deep.
visible forms and fleeting imagery.
and the Name is nothing but pure divine light.
its station is mighty and surely profound.
its essence baffles all who know.
a mirror with no directions in sight.

ECHOES OF ETERNAL TRUTH

An essence in itself, veiled in subtlety's grace;
Its pinnacle is the *Ghawth* who attains,
Hold to the Prophet's wird in hand,
Do not make *ʿibāda* your lord or station;
Don't seek—be the one who's sought;
The Beloved is the secret of the Loved Divine;
Your seclusion lies within your heart;
Knowledge flows through divine decree;
Through the Karkari, you will ascend,
You witness the beauty in sudden display,
The name and named, a single entity—
As my Shaykh said in a verse of old,
Be annihilated, wholly erased;
The full moon of guidance thus rises anew,
O lover, surrender your soul sincere;
Annihilate your *nafs* within His self,
All creation rests within your hand;
Provision and will flow from here
Fold your sun in prostration's embrace;
You'll grasp the truth of everlasting stay
This tablet is yours, none else's place;
The writer is unseen, realization deep,
The servant remains a servant pure,
They need the form to stay intact,
The ego is here erased to naught;

journeying through it alone, one finds their place.
endlessly returning to God's domains.
remembrance, the condition for *fanāʾ*'s stand.
for openings come through the Shaykh's permission.
through discipline and obedience, all is brought.
precedence marked by revealed signs in line.
the outward form is for your ignorance's part.
"Be" and it is, as willed to be.
self and other dissolve at the end.
the lofty essence unveiled this way.
this is the *hāʾ* of divine identity.
a truth that remains in time's stronghold.
in ignorance, poverty is embraced.
revealing the secret of *khilāfa* to you.
erase the ignorance of your *tawḥīd*, *faqīr*.
and thus you become His vicegerent itself.
your world is within your heart's command.
the lām of all souls drawing near.
in the heavens of transcendence, majesty's place.
the realm storing eternal script in display.
the pen is bound within its holy space.
etching the secret of Layla you alone keep.
no matter how far they roam and endure.
bringing creation's realm all the way back.
those who claim it lose mercy sought.

The brothers are light of faith's array;
The gate of eternity we opened wide;
Gather what's yours, return renewed
The coming and going, cycle renewed—
Through knowledge's truth, adornment gained,
Names appear as essences true,
All abide in eternal single state;
The *alif* of eternity extends its flow,
Your *idhn* remains from your Shaykh's decree—
Prophethood and message, journey side by side,
This is the imam's path to find,
Your tablet is written in love's pure stream,
The glass will shatter by his command,
Here you are with your Lord so close;
In this nearness, you alone remain—
In pure absoluteness you shall contemplate,
Essence shines in purest form
Beyond all readings, a knowledge stands still
Only my Shaykh holds its hidden keys,
O Lord, by him, let us not stray;
The secret of union and *fanāʾ's* grace
This is a unique path, so seek
Humans grasp from its truth only
And blessings, O Lord, upon the one
And upon his family, immaculate and bright,

read in the forms to connect and stay.
dwell there as you wish and abide.
with honey's essence, wholly imbued.
you become the essence the Prophets bloomed.
after in likeness you were restrained.
no *shirk* there only reality's view.
to the Supreme Name no bounds relate.
ink on a tablet that never will go.
source of the dot of divine sanctity.
with your master as you must abide.
not a throne with ranks behind.
the essence of Ahmad's truth supreme.
only if you remain in a humble stand.
a moment of attraction, precious most.
a secret of yours, without a chain.
your words falling short to praise and narrate.
with righteous ones, in union warm.
unknown except by the *walī's* pure will.
and grants to whomsoever he decrees.
nor from your blessings withhold our way.
in loving al-Muṣṭafā's noble race.
its meanings from the Lord, sublime and deep.
visible forms and fleeting imagery.
who is the identity and dot from which all begun,
and his companions, all steadfast in light.

ARE YOU ONE OF THE MEN (RIJĀL)?

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Especially Merciful.

O seekers on the Path, we will turn our hearts today to a verse from the Book of Allah, a verse that requires a vision that penetrates beyond the surface of the words. It is the thirty-fourth verse of Sūrat al-Nisāʾ (Q 4).

Allah, the Exalted, says: **“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women…” (*al-rijālu qawwāmūna ʿalā al-nisāʾ*…) (Q 4:34)**. We must immediately stop here and ask: who are these “men” (*al-rijāl*) that Allah speaks of? I tell you, they are not simply males (*dhukūr*). The Qur’an itself defines them for us in another place. They are the ones who remember Allah, of whom He says, they are **"men whom neither commerce nor sale diverts from the remembrance of Allah… They fear a Day when hearts and eyes will be overturned" (Q 24:37)**. These are the true *rijāl*.

So, by what standard are these men designated as “protectors” (*qawwāmūn*)? By what preference (*tafḍīl*)? It is because they are men who have become enraptured (*hāmū*) in the remembrance of Allah. For them, the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah and obedience to Him is the highest rank. It is through this devotion that the firmness (*thubūt*) of their connection (*ṣila*) with Allah is established. This is the source of their preference and their higher station (*maqām*). Even in their spending (*nafaqa*), their generosity is of a higher order. If we were to compare, the generosity of these men is more profound than that of even the most upright of these women.

And who are these righteous women (*al-nisāʾ*)? They are those who live by the examples of the perfected women (*al-kummal min al-nisāʾ*) like our mother Fāṭima and Maryam. They are defined by their devout obedience (*qunūt*) and righteousness (*ṣalāḥ*). And they guard all that is unseen (*ghaybī*). This means they guard the honor of their men in their presence and in their absence, and on a deeper level,

they guard the unseen of the Real Himself (*al-Ḥaqq*), Glory be to Him. These are women of true and complete rectitude (*istiqāma*).

Now, what of the woman who exhibits *nushūz* — rebellion and ill-conduct? You must first advise her (*fa-ʿiẓūhunna*) with the beautiful qualities of righteousness we have just mentioned. But listen well: she must be able to see these qualities in you. A man who is himself astray (*ḍāll*) and deviant (*zāyigh*) has no right to advise others. I tell you, the man must rectify himself first before he looks at others.

If she does not listen, then you are to "abandon them in bed" (*wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ*). This does not mean you leave the house. Rather, you leave her side of the bed, perhaps sleeping below it, but in the same room. You do not speak to her, you do not have conjugal relations with her, you do not kiss her. You do not flee from her. This is the meaning of abandonment in the place of lying down — so that she feels that you are displeased with her.

The act of "striking" (*wa-ḍribūhunna*) comes after this. It is not to strike with a stick or to flog (*jald*). Rather, you must make your disapproval of her deviance manifest to her. It is not a physical beating. And if she returns to the right way, you must return to your normal state of being good and gentle, so that you do not wound her. And in all this, do not admonish excessively, for you are a servant (*ʿabd*), not a lord (*rabb*).

But now we come to the true lesson, the inward meaning (*bāṭin*). This is how you must apply this verse to your own self (*nafs*).

You must be the man (*rajul*), the maintainer, of your own soul. You must rectify it through spending (*nafaqa*) for the sake of Allah Most High and His messenger, peace be upon him. This spending will soften your heart. It will teach you about the portion in your wealth that belongs to Allah, His Messenger, his family, and the needy. This is a cure for the self, so that it does not return to hoarding wealth for wealth's sake. This practice gives you spiritual gentleness (*līn*) and certainty (*yaqīn*), because you have trust that Allah takes what you give first.

Then, you must seek out the unseen (*al-ghayb*) and conceal it. This means truly knowing that "what is in my Lord's possession is better." For example, when you give, you do so with the inner certainty that Allah receives it and will return it to you in better forms. This is the inner secret.

And what if your *nafs* rebels? You must admonish it. If it persists, you must abandon it (*tahjurhā*) and not give it its pleasures (*maladhdhāt*). Look at the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, when he would perform spiritual retreat (*iʿtikāf*) in the last ten nights of Ramadan. He would leave his wives, even though it was lawful to be with them after sunset. He was declaring with his state, "The time I have with You, my Lord, is better than with women and all of creation." This is a reality for him even outside of Ramadan, as he said, "I have an hour in which nothing but my Lord suffices me." For you, this abandonment might be to cut off a habit the nafs loves, like watching a film before you sleep.

If it still rebels, you must "strike" it. You restrain it (*taʿṣimuhā*), you deprive it of its claimed rights, and you give precedence to the rights of Allah and His Messenger until it becomes upright. You do not give it what it craves. You rebuke it. You do not give it authority and power. Rather, you compel it to its spiritual duties (*waẓāʾif*), its remembrance (*dhikr*), and its service (*khidma*).

It is through this sacred "admonishment," "abandonment," and "striking" of your soul that you will find love for Allah and nearness to Him restored to you. And when you find this sweetness (*ḥalāwa*) after this struggle, then give your self some of its due right. Do not be overly harsh on it. Give it what Allah has made permissible for it.

This is how this verse falls upon your own soul, even if you are not married. In both cases, if you measure yourself against this Qur'anic definition of manhood, you will find yourself

far, very far from it. Allah here is speaking to the *rijāl*, not to the foolish (*sufahāʾ*). You will find your own self to be foolish. So, measure yourself. This verse speaks of our dealings (*muʿāmalāt*). If you are a man as defined by the Qur'an, then you must apply this verse to your dealings with your own self, and then to your dealings with your wife.

PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE AND THE ILLUSORY REALITY OF EXISTENCE

According to the Karkari Path

BY AMOR BEJAOUI

The idea that existence is an illusion and that the sensible world around us is not real is among the philosophical ideas adopted by many intellectual currents both ancient and modern, whether in Western or Eastern philosophy. In this twenty-first century, we still have not yet grasped this idea due to the difficulty of actualizing it in reality. As a result, many people have thought that the illusion of existence is merely a pure intellectual theory with no practical existence in our lived reality, and engaging with it is considered intellectual luxury with no benefit.

How valid is this statement? What is the position of the Karkari Path regarding all this? Can it prove the opposite practically? What is the extent of the influence of its viewpoints on the thought and lifestyle of its followers?

Although the Karkari Path is fundamentally an educational method that strives earnestly to elevate the human being to the ranks of spiritual and psychological purity until they reach knowledge of their Lord, Mighty and Glorious, it is also a way of life that attempts, through keeping pace with the developments of its era and understanding the requirements of its reality, to broaden the horizons of human understanding in a smooth manner that accords with all intellectual levels. It helps individuals dive into the depths of their soul to become more acquainted with its hidden aspects and provides them with convincing answers to existential and metaphysical questions that have long perplexed their minds. It helps them free themselves from the constraints of their dependencies on cultural inheritances, social customs, and rational and scientific theories that others have labored long to establish in their

minds since childhood, so that they can discover for themselves the reality of their existence and the reality of existence around them, becoming certain that it is a passing illusion with no real existence.

With the Karkari Path's earnest striving to achieve its goals, we find some people always yearning for darkness and ignorance, wanting neither light nor knowledge for themselves or others. You see them being stubborn and obstinate, viciously cursing the Karkari Path. Despite all this, the followers of the Karkari Path always make excuses for them and try with them in all gentleness and by various means to take them by the hand to reach knowledge of the reality of their existence.

In this article, we will, God willing, attempt to clarify the role of the Karkariya Sufi order in simplifying the meanings of what we have mentioned, bringing concepts closer and supporting them with evidence and proofs, so that the reader may be able to understand the truth of his own existence and the reality of the existence around him.

The difficulty of this process lies in the hardship of implementing its steps due to their connection to your will, O human being who has claimed to seek the truth. Are you truly worthy of sacrifice to attain your goal (*murād*) and ready to renounce your intellectual heritage, or are you still not mature enough for this task?

Since we think well of you, we do not expect ready-made answers from you, but your sincere effort (*himma*) in approaching the knowledge of truth at the hands of the first teacher (*al-muʿallim al-awwal*) of this age without dispute suffices us — my master Mohamed Faouzi al-Karkari, may Allah sanctify his secret, who has never spared effort in taking us by the hand, being patient with our ignorance, and guiding us.

Through his abundant writings, lessons, and discussions (*mudhākarāt*), he has clarified his view of existence (*al-wujūd*) and the Founder of Existence (*wājid al-wujūd*), glory be to Him. He said that he believes in the One, Unique God (*Allah al-wāḥid al-aḥad*), but as for existence, it has no existence, since the reality of existence for him belongs to the One, the Unique, glory be to Him, while we are a passing illusion (*wahm zāʾil*) with no existence at all.

He believes that all existence is one, and it is a point or atom (*dharra*) in its non-existence (*ʿadamiyya*), not in its existence, since the Creator created it. God Almighty says: **"Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (*ratqan*), then We separated them (*fa-fataqnāhumā*)?" (Q 21:30)**

The heavens and earth were a non-existent atom (*dharra ʿadamiyya*). It is wrong to believe that existence is non-existence while you, O human, see existence for yourself. Rather, you are part of this existence, and therefore you also have no existence. Everything you see and all the thought you carry is pure non-existence (*ʿadam maḥḍ*), and this is exactly what the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, expressed when he said: "For if you do not exist" (*fa-in lam takun*), meaning you have no existence.

Faced with the inability of the human intellect (*al-ʿaql al-basharī*) to comprehend that what it sees around it is an illusion (*wahm*) with no reality, our Ahaykh, may Allah be pleased with him, undertook to simplify and clarify this meaning. He said that this illusion is a shadow (*ẓill*) of reality, so existence becomes a shadow and trace (*athar*) of Allah's names, and since Allah's names do not separate from the Named (*al-musammā*), the entire universe is considered the shadow of the Creator and a trace of the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*), exalted and glorified, and through it you reach knowledge of the Creator (*al-Bāriʾ*). In this sense, existence is not God, but rather a passing shadow and trace of the One who has existence, the One, Unique, glory be to Him.

His evidence for deriving this truth is Allah's saying: **"Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche (*mishkāh*) within which is a lamp (*miṣbāḥ*), the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a**

brilliant star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things" (Q 24:35).

The effect of this luminous attribute (*al-ṣifa al-nūrāniyya*) of Allah, glory be to Him, is the heavens and the earth. When He, glory be to Him, radiated with His light, He manifested the heavens and the earth, so they became a shadow of that light. Since we are part of these heavens and earth, we have no right to deny our reality, which is light, and establish illusion in its place.

We have decided to support our Shaykh's words, may Allah sanctify his secret — which come beyond the capacity of ordinary human understanding — by mentioning Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and its implications, hoping that together we might understand what its signs symbolize, making it easier for us to comprehend viewing existence around us with a new critical Karkari perspective that qualifies us to break with the familiar. Through it, the reality is revealed to us that the knowledge we have acquired through our senses alone does not give us knowledge we can trust. As followers of the Karkari Path, we must sever our relationship with blind imitation and increase our remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah and reflection on His creation (*al-tafakkur fī khalqihi*), as He directed us: "Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], **'Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire'" (Q 3:191).**

Plato's cave is among his most famous philosophical theories throughout history. It is a realistic metaphor for

our lives through which Plato sought to clarify how reality affects our view of things around us and our derivation of their truth. It tells us about the possibility of multiple visions according to multiple angles of viewing them. The essential idea upon which Plato built this theory is that what we see — or rather what we have become accustomed to seeing through what we have acquired from our senses — may not be reality, but merely deceptive shadows (*ẓilāl khādiʿa*) of the truth.

He presented the cave allegory in his book The Republic through the voice of Socrates speaking to one of his followers, saying: Imagine human beings who have crouched since their tender age in an underground cave with a long passage toward the light, their legs and necks chained with fetters that do not allow them to move from their places or see anything except what falls before their eyes, because the chains prevented them from turning their heads. Behind them burns a fire lit at a distance in a high place, and between the fire and the prisoners is an elevated road. Imagine along this road a small wall similar to those barriers that puppet players place before them. Now picture along the small wall men carrying various types of industrial tools, including shapes of people, animals, and others. The prisoners see only shadows of what passes the road and hear only the echo of their chatter, so they believe that these are the only reality of the world around them.

Now let us suppose that we freed one of these prisoners and forced him to get up, turn his head, and walk, raising his eyes toward the light. Then he will suffer sharp pains. What do you think he will say if we tell him that what he was seeing before is not reality but a false illusion? Don't you think he will feel confused and lost, so he tries to escape and return to what he was? If we lead him against his will and proceed with him on the path, he cannot do so, at least at the beginning, because he actually needs to gradually accustom himself before he can see things in that upper world.

Initially, it is easier for him to see images of people and other things reflected on the water's surface than to see the things themselves. After that, he can raise his eyes to the lights of the stars and moon, so contemplating them at night is easier for him than contemplating the sun and its glare during the day. The last thing he can look at is the sun — not reflected on the water's surface, but as it is itself and in its own place.

If he then returns to his old dwelling and his fellow prisoners, don't you think he will rejoice at that change that occurred to him and pity their condition? Imagine what happens if our friend returns, occupies his old place in the cave, and begins telling them that what they see before them is an illusion reflecting shadows of reality. Won't they mock him and say he only ascended to corrupt his sight? If someone tries to free them from their chains and lead them to the truth, don't you think that if they could catch him, they would harm him?

This is Plato's cave allegory in brief. Now we will turn to understanding its symbols and connecting them to the topic of this article.

The dark cave in the allegory is nothing but our reality in which we live, and to whose darkness our eyes have become accustomed and adapted throughout our lives, so we know nothing else. For us, it is the absolute reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muṭlaqa*) beyond which there is no other reality.

The prisoners chained since their tender age are us humans since we were children, with others filling our thoughts and minds with information we did not derive ourselves but was imposed on us by force until it became entrenched in our minds over time and became the sole reference for knowing right from wrong. For us, it is the measure and judge. If we encounter new information, we measure it against this standard — if it agrees with what we learned before, we accept it, and if it contradicts it, we fight it and antagonize its proponents and seek to harm them because they contradict the ideas we have grown accustomed to. Worse than that, the large number of these people contributed to convincing them that they are right, so you see them unconcerned about the

persecution and exclusion they inflict on their opponents. Since you, dear reader, have now awakened to what happens to you from prior programming of your thoughts, why don't you initiate reviewing your stored information and try to subject it to the microscope of scrutiny, hoping to return yourself to your sound natural disposition (*fiṭra salīma*) that you were upon before others intervened in arranging your life?

This natural disposition (*fiṭra*) is the world of light (*ʿālam al-nūr*) we were in before being chained and forced to remain in the cave's darkness and convinced of illusions as reality. This is the stage that our Shaykh, may Allah be pleased with him, seeks to return us to — the sound natural disposition — in confirmation of the hadith of the Chosen One, peace and blessings be upon him, when he said: "Every newborn is born on the natural disposition (*fiṭra*), then his parents make him Jewish, Christian, or Magian."

The natural disposition is the light, the absolute truth, and the religion that Allah chose for us. Allah Almighty says: **"Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam" (3:19).**

Though Judaism and Christianity are heavenly religions calling to monotheism, they have been corrupted and no longer convey the truth but have become its shadow. As for Magianism, it has no relation to truth at all, and its followers are slaves to that fire that turns truths in the cave into shadows reflected on the wall in the color of darkness. In this context, Allah Almighty says through His prophet: **"And O my people, why do I call you to salvation while you call me to the Fire?" (Q 40:41)**. Salvation is escape from the cave's prison and its chains to the expanse of truth, while their call to the Fire is nothing but submission and surrender to the tyranny of dark illusion.

The prisoner who was freed from among the cave's prisoners is myself and every seeker (*murīd*) in the Karkari path. Our Shaykh, may Allah sanctify his secret, loosened the bonds of our captivity and undertook the process of bringing us out from the cave of our illusions' darkness.

May Allah reward him with the best reward for us, for he bore insults and harm, endured people's enmity toward him, and was patient with our harshness for nothing except to take us by the hand and save us from the mire of our souls' darkness to the light of the Truth, exalted and glorified. He wants no reward or thanks from us.

By merely following his trace (*atharihi*) and pledging allegiance to him (*bayʿa*), he showed us the star of guidance (*najm al-hidāya*) shining in our hearts. This step is nothing but standing before the cave's opening, which is the niche (*mishkā*), through which we saw the light of the lamp, which is the illuminating beacon (*al-sirāj al-munīr*). We walked in his path, then he gradually brought us out from the cave's darkness until we could see the moon rising as a full moon (*badran*). In each of these stages, he remains patient with our complaints, ignorance, and poor manners with him, knowing in advance the difficulty of the process of departing from the familiar. One whose eyes have been accustomed to seeing darkness all his life will not easily accept leaving it. He must struggle against his soul (*mujāhadat nafsihi*) and bear its pains. If he is patient with that and shows readiness to know the truth, our Shaykh, may Allah be pleased with him, enters him into spiritual retreat (*al-khulwa*) and shows him the Sun of Gnosis (*shams al-maʿrifa*) shining in broad daylight, after he could only see stars and moon at night.

With the rising of the sun's first light, the reality of the seeker's ignorance becomes clear, and worse than all that is that before we were happy with this compound ignorance (*jahl murakkab*) and fought everyone who extended their hand wanting to help us.

The light of the sun of truth is not discursive information that tongues repeat, thinking that merely discussing it means possessing it — like one who studies books of mysticism and speaks the words of Allah's people without experiencing their experience. Rather, it is a shining light that flows from the heart of our Shaykh, may Allah sanctify his secret, to the hearts of his followers, clearing for them the darkness of their illusions so they realize through it that existence has no existence, and true existence belongs only to Allah, the One, the Unique. They all say as Allah Almighty says: **"Indeed, this is the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*)" (56:95).**

The act of the prisoner returning to the cave after realizing the truth and attempting to convince the remaining prisoners to break their chains and bring them out from their illusion's darkness to the light of truth is the same thing that the disciples of the Karkari Path do with common people out of mercy for them, because the example of one who remains in darkness is like the dead, and Allah wants life for us. Allah Almighty says: "And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in the darkness, never to emerge therefrom? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing" (Q 6:122).

Naturally, the process of convincing prisoners to leave darkness for light is very difficult, accompanied by mockery, insults, and harm. Therefore, you find all these defamatory campaigns against the Karkari Path and its followers being continuously promoted. They portray them as people whose sight was corrupted when they left the cave, so they must be fought, antagonized, and not listened to.

Truly, the path to reaching truth is not easy — it requires sacrifice, patience, and a firm will. Our imitation of Plato's cave allegory is only a gateway to sharpen our resolve and a means to break with illusion and live in light.

Perhaps some of you now wonder what new thing the Karkari Path has brought to distinguish it from other Sufi paths, ancient and modern, knowing that its view of existence is merely an extension of what Ibn ʿArabī said in his book *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom), al-Ghazālī in his book *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (The Deliverer from Error), al-Suhrawardī in his book *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (The Philosophy of Illumination), and other mystical philosophers when they said that the material world is a shadow of divine reality, which is light, and that true existence belongs to God alone.

We say that the KarkarI Path's distinction is that it is the child of its age, keeping pace with developments in current events, speaking with its generation's voice, and not adopting the sayings of mystical luminaries merely to prove its allegiance to them. Rather, its decisions are independent and pioneering, enabling it to undertake the task of proving existence's

illusory nature practically in a reality dominated by materialism and selfishness, and in a society where each individual is preoccupied with his own virtual world, delighting in his illusions and not wanting to leave them. The sayings of al-Ghazālī, Ibn ʿArabī, al-Suhrawardī, and other luminaries of mysticism and philosophy remained mere academic material studied by researchers, academics, and university professors as theories of knowledge through which they obtain academic degrees they boast of possessing, without seeking to experience them practically.

We, by the grace of following the Karkari Path, have been freed from the dependency of parroting "so-and-so said" and "such-and-such said" after our Shaykh, by his pure grace, undertook to help us experience the search for truth and reality ourselves. We reached the taste of the pleasure (tadhawwuq ladhdhat) of liberation from the affliction of illusion and its dependencies.

Truly, we live by the grace of this unique experience in light, and what we want from you is your permission for us to share this great blessing with you. Help us break your chains so that together we can bring you out from the cave of illusion to the light of truth.

AN INVITATION TO THE DIVINE LIGHT, PART 4

Entering the Presence—Practical Guidance for Seeking the Light

BY SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

If you are truly pious, why not take a minute or several minutes to get up during the last third of the night? Sit for a minute or a few brief moments and say to Him: "O my Lord, show Yourself to me so that I may look at You." Then, a thought may come to your heart, and you will say, "I seek forgiveness from Allah; I cannot bear it." But say instead, "O my Lord, make a sign for me, a verse, a clear proof." It's just between you and your Lord. If you err, say, "I seek forgiveness from Allah." This is what happened with Mūsā.

So the mountain was rendered level and **"Mūsā fell unconscious. When he recovered he said, 'Praise be to you! To you I turn in repentance!" (Q 7:143)**. Mūsā began to seek forgiveness from Allah, but not like before. Now he was seeking forgiveness as if he sees Him.

This was the case for Mūsā. As for the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, when he was asked if he saw his lord he said, "Light that I see." But as for you and I, we have **"A chapter We have revealed and made obligatory" (Q 24:1)**. Think deeply about this.

Instead of spending all your time in that 3-by-3-meter library of yours, straining your eyes, try to sit for just fifteen minutes and pray two units of prayer (*rakʿa*). If Allah accepts it from you, then He has accepted everything from you. Regardless of your sins and your excesses, no matter how you have been. Turn off the lights and imagine yourself in the grave, in that small room where you sit in the last third of the night.

Say, "O my Lord, 'O my Lord, show Yourself to me so that I may look at You,' following the example of Mūsā."

Say, "O my Lord, show me Your light," following the example of Muḥammad ﷺ.

Say, "O my Lord, show me the stars, the moon, and the sun," following the example of Ibrāhīm, "so that I may follow the upright religion."

Try this instead of aimlessly philosophizing. One says, "Ibn ʿArabī says…", another quotes al-Ḥallāj, and another brings up Ibn so-and-so, on and on, until you've clouded people's minds. And yet you don't feel ashamed when you sit with yourself, nor do you search within yourself to know your own truth.

Have you ever closed your eyes to truly see what's inside you, how your inner state really is? You've lived in a world of outward appearances, never seeing within. If you try, you'll find yourself facing the darkness of a deep ocean, layer upon layer of darkness (Q 24:40). This is how that room of yours remains in darkness.

Do you think it's difficult for Allah to expand your chest and show you a trace of His Light? Do you think it's too much for Him? No, it's you who imagines it to be difficult. And so you've made what is easy for the Almighty seem hard.

So, what is the reason for your lack of trust that Allah will grant you light? It's a weakness and lack of *īmān*. You lack confidence in yourself. And yet, you do have some confidence in yourself since you pray. So why don't you have confidence in yourself to see the light during prayer? Go ahead. Why don't you see the proof (*burhān*) of charity in giving charity? [1] Why don't you see the radiance of fasting in fasting? Why don't you have this confidence?

It's because, deep down, you're convinced that you're far from Allah.

Well, this is your chance. Draw closer to Allah. Know that Allah loves you because He and His angels send blessings upon you to bring you out of darkness into light. Even when Allah sent you the saints (*awliyā'*), it wasn't for any worldly purpose. They weren't sent to add or subtract from your knowledge, no. **"Allah is the *walī* of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into light" (Q 2:257)**.

If this saint (*walī*) doesn't lead you to the light of Allah, then he's not a saint. As for those who claim, "My master

so-and-so is a saint," how does he benefit you? He lives comfortably in a palace while you're struggling in the streets, suffering—you need to ask yourself: "If I am truly a believer, and he is truly a saint, wouldn't he lead me out of the darkness — that has accumulated over me until I can no longer see the truth of myself — to the Light of my Lord?"

So, what does the saint do for you? He shows you how, he shows you the path (*maslak*). It's not about doing litanies in a circle.

Sufism existed in Morocco before Mūlay ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 622/1225), but it was derivative from Eastern Sufism. At that time, Moroccan Sufism followed the path of Junayd (d. 298/910) and it was individualistic. Later, Sufism became collective. Then Ibn Mashīsh made Sufism in Morocco free and independent. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) was responsible for the emergence of this Western Sufism, and he studied under Ibn Mashīsh.

Ibn Mashīsh (may Allah be pleased with him) says, "Whoever guides you to the world has deceived you." You are running after it, and even your Sufism has become a means to this pursuit. Then Ibn Mashīsh adds, "Whoever guides you to litanies (*awrād*) will tire you. Whoever guides you to Allah has truly advised you." This is so that you do not think that Sufism is about litanies.

These are not my words; this is what Ibn Mashīsh says, the one who developed a distinct Western Sufism that was no longer derivative of the Eastern tradition. He made it so that Morocco came to be known as the land of saints, and the East as the land of prophets. We're not against Junayd, but I'm presenting to you a definition of Sufism from someone with an independent understanding of what it means to walk the path to the Almighty.

My Lord called Himself "the Light," one of His beautiful names. His attribute is Light. Islam is light—**"As for one whose chest Allah has expanded for Islam so that he is upon light from his Lord" (Q 29:22)**. This is not a mere Muslim. It is *one whose chest Allah expands* that is "upon light from His Lord." *Īmān* is light which God casts into the heart of the believing servant. The Qur'an is light. The Prophet ﷺ is light, a "light-giving beacon" (*sirāj munīr*) (Q 33:46), that is, the light of a resplendent planet.

All the Karkariyya do is present to you the exemplification of Allah's Light. The Light is Allah's, and

the exemplification is Allah's. This is what we try to clarify. So be careful before it's too late, so that you don't leave this world with a heavy heart.

If you don't think you need this, then reflect on the chapter of "The Iron" (*al-Ḥadīd*): **"On the day when you will see the believing men and women with their light spreading out before them and to their right. A glad tiding for you today: gardens through which rivers flow, abiding therein." (Q 57:12)**. Notice that Allah did not say the *Muslims*, but the *believers* (*al-mu'minīn*), because whenever Allah speaks about light he refers only to the believers. The light is the "glad tiding" of paradise.

"On the same Day, the hypocrites, both men and women, will say to the believers, 'Wait for us! Let us have some of your light!' They will be told, 'Go back and seek light'" (Q 57:13). They are told to return to *this world* to seek light. Thus, try to seek Allah's light in this world before it's too late, because you will be questioned about it.

"A wall with a door will be erected between them: inside it lies mercy, outside lies torment. The hypocrites will call out to the believers, 'Were we not with you?'" The hypocrites will say how they used to eat with the believers, pray with them, remember Allah with them, sit with them, and so on. But the believers will reply, **"'Yes. But you allowed yourselves to succumb to temptation…'" (Q 57:13-14)**.

Allah shows us where the disease lies: **"… you allowed yourselves to succumb to temptation, you were hesitant and doubtful, and you were deluded by wishful thinking, until God's command came. Your own deceptive thoughts deluded you." (57:14)**. We find here a lesson for the self.

"Today no ransom will be accepted from you nor from those who disbelieved" (Q 57:15). That will be the end of the matter. But what is terrifying is how these individuals deprived of light are grouped alongside the disbelievers.

Then Allah says, "Is it not time for believers to humble their hearts in reverence at the remembrance of Allah." Allah mentioned the believers, and calls for them to not just remember Him, but for their hearts to be humbled in reverence. Thus, what will cause you to attain Allah's Light is a heart humbled in reverence at the remembrance of Allah.

As for your remembrance prior to light, the people of Allah refer to this as "mindless remembrance" (*dhikr jafā'*). Ibn Mashīsh refers to this as "tiresome." So why do you leave the easy way when the Prophet ﷺ said "Make things easy and not difficult" (Muslim)? Do not repulse people and exhaust them. Some people boast of reciting 10,000 or 100,000 litanies but they have never seen the Allah's Light their entire life. If that's the case then you should be seeing the Prophet ﷺ in your sleep and while awake, since you claim to be among those close to Allah!

So wherein lies the problem? Your insight is obscured. There is no humble reverence. There is no inward turn towards Allah's Light.

This is all I have to offer you, and I do not say this for the sake of anyone other than Allah alone.

So if you want Allah's Light, don't come to come. Just wake up at last third of the night, close your eyes, turn off the light, and put away all other distractions. From this blessed night, try to feel the sweetness of those in this higher station. Rather than sit to watch a film or read a book, just sit with yourself. Learn to sit on the floor with your legs crossed. Look within your heart and pray to your Lord. By Allah, the Almighty, He will not disappoint you, ever. Those who have seen the Light of Allah are not better than you. We are the least of creation.

O seeker (*murīd*) of Allah, I only repeat to you what those before me have said. I have nothing new to add of my own. If you heed and understand my words, they will lead you to Allah.

O seeker, immerse yourself in the wine of divine oneness and seek out this purity, this divine luminosity. If you desire more

then forget about everything else. So take the Ocean of Eternity, for that is the Ocean of Allah, and much has been said about this Ocean and its waves.

Therefore, we cannot deny the words of the righteous, the prophets and messengers, and the Lord of Glory entirely, only to follow some conventional or trending theory we learned from our social groups or from someone with limited knowledge who indoctrinated us with it, such that it becomes the air we breath, when that air itself is toxic.

If you wish to dedicate yourself to Allah, then dedicate yourself through the Light of Allah—that's it. Welcome the presence (*ḥaḍra*) of Allah and make a pledge to Him. Pray two units of prayer with the intention to fulfill this need, call upon the Lord, and forget the reproaching and commanding self (*al-nafs al-lawwāma, al-nafs al-ammāra*) until you are free of its ailments. Try to let go of it. Turn to the Creator with sincere remembrance, close your eyes, delve into the darkness of your self, and call upon the Lord.

I'm not telling you, as others do, to repeat a specific litany so that Allah will give you a certain number of palaces in Paradise or the like. With such a heart, you'll gain nothing. If He wishes to give you something, He'll give you everything without requiring anything in return.

So you, turn to Allah, the Almighty, and ask Him to show you a sign—a sign to bring you peace of mind. Whenever you're engaged in a discourse or worldly affair, you need some sort of proof, right? When you get married, you need proof; when you buy a car, you need proof. You always need insurance and assurance for what you're doing. So, ask Allah to give you a sign to ease your soul and help you recognize that you're on the Prophetic path of Aḥmad.

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[1] As the Prophet ﷺ says in a hadith, "Prayer is light and charity is a proof (*al-ṣadaqa burhān*)" (Muslim).

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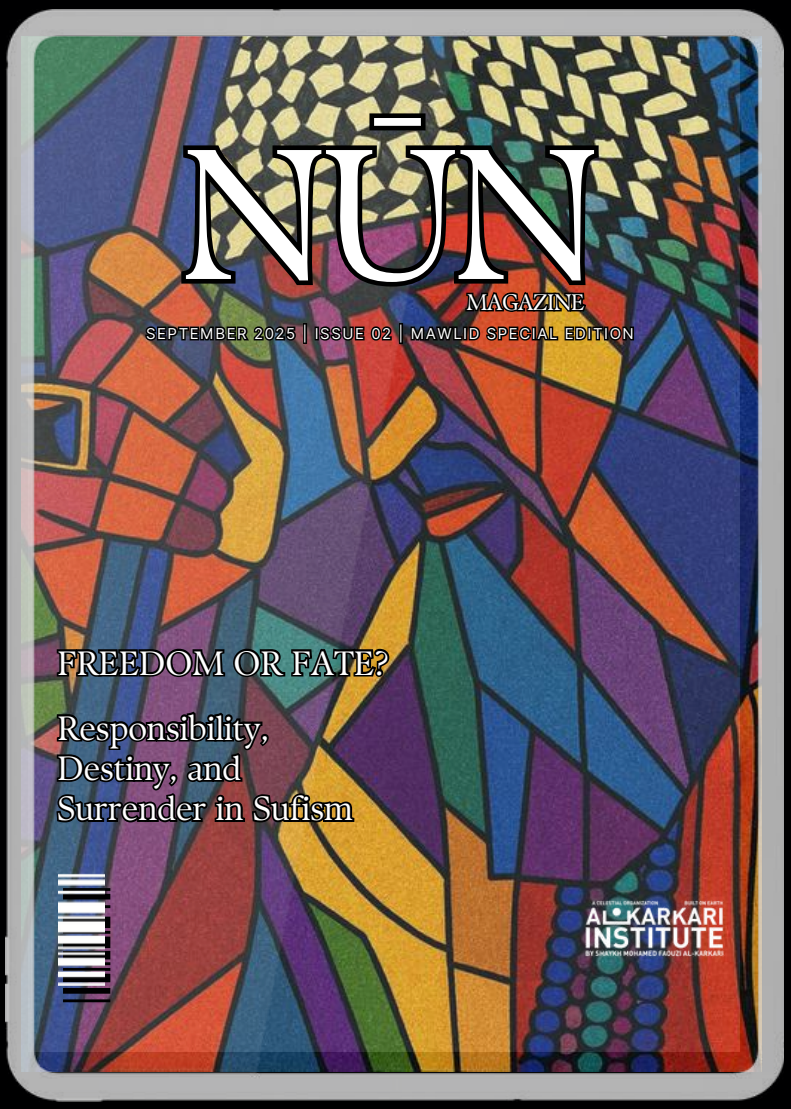

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